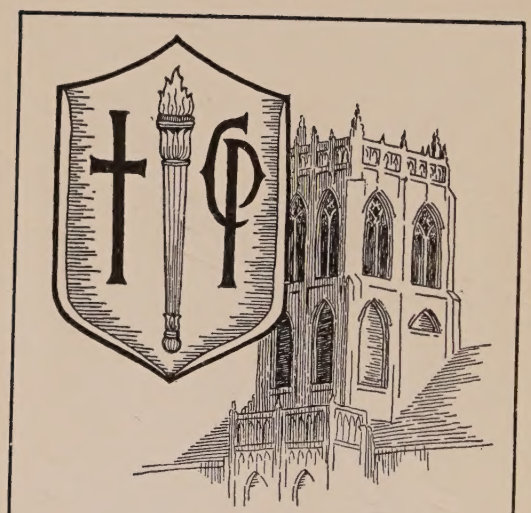
ARABIC LITERATURE

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Arabic Literature

An Introduction

By

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PREFACE

THAT outside the Koran and the *Arabian Nights* there exists an Arabic literature at all is comparatively little known. It has been the aim of this book both to indicate the scope of that literature in its entirety, and to discuss in greater detail its more purely literary branches. So vast a field, with the whole of which few can claim an intimate acquaintance, could only be covered at the cost of some dogmatism and generalization, even in cases where critical opinion is divided. Arabists will at once detect where the work of the eminent Oriental scholars of the last half century has been laid under contribution; this debt, too large to be indicated throughout the text, is fully acknowledged here. The method of treatment was suggested in the first place by Mr. J. de M. Johnson, and the text itself owes much to the kindly criticisms passed on the original draft by Professor Sir Thomas Arnold, on whom, however, no responsibility rests for any heresies that may be found in its pages.

H. A. R. G.

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
1. Introduction	5
2. The Arabic Language	9
3. The Heroic Age (*c.* A. D. 500–622)	14
4. The Age of Expansion (A. D. 622–750)	23
5. The Golden Age (A. D. 750–1055)	33
§ 1. (A. D. 750–813)	37
§ 2. (A. D. 813–847)	43
§ 3. (A. D. 847–945)	49
§ 4. (A. D. 945–1055)	60
(*a*) The Circle of Sayf ad-Dawla	61
(*b*) Iraq under the Buwayhids	64
(*c*) Eastern Persia	68
(*d*) Egypt and North-west Africa	74
(*e*) Spain (A. D. 750–1091)	75
6. The Silver Age (A. D. 1055–1258)	82
§ 1. Iraq and Persia	85
§ 2. Egypt and Syria	91
§ 3. Sicily	96
§ 4. Spain	98
7. The Age of the Mamlūks (A. D. 1258–1800)	102
§ 1. Egypt and Syria to A. D. 1517	103
§ 2. Spain and North-west Africa	108
§ 3. A. D. 1517–1800	114
Epilogue	117
Appendix	120
Index	126

I. *Introduction*

ARABIC literature is the enduring monument of a civilization, not of a people. Its contributors were men of the most varied ethnic origins who, nevertheless, under the influence of their Arab conquerors, lost their national languages, traditions, and customs and were moulded into a unity of thought and belief, absorbed into a new and wider Arab nation. The Persians alone, though only after assimilating many of the characteristics and tendencies of the Arabs, succeeded at length in restoring their intellectual and racial independence. Yet even when Arabic was in the Eastern provinces displaced from its supremacy by the rise of a Persian literature, it maintained, and still maintains, its position as the universal language of Islamic theology, philosophy, and science. To a greater extent perhaps than the other classical literatures (for the medieval Arabic literature is the youngest of these) its flowering was conditional not only upon the existence of a cultured society but also on the liberality and patronage of those in high position. Sharing the historical vicissitudes of the Islamic civilization it faithfully reflects local political and cultural conditions. As the Muslim society decayed its literature lost vitality and force, but so long as in one capital or another princes and ministers found pleasure, profit, or reputation in patronizing the arts, the torch was kept burning, however dimly. So we find that now one land and now another becomes the chief centre of literary activity, until at a period roughly coinciding with the Ottoman conquests in Asia and Africa, and the Renaissance in Europe, the torch flares up for a moment before it is extinguished in the ruins of the Saracen civilization. The literature of the following centuries, in spite of its volume, is the imitative

and lifeless work of a 'Dark Age', while the modern revival of Arabic literature in Syria and Egypt is inspired by another spirit than that of the old exclusive classical civilization.

Arabic literature has also shared the fate of the classical literatures in that many valuable works are, it is to be feared, irretrievably lost, while many others have been rescued only by the patient labours of European scholars. As they were dependent for their preservation on a society indifferent, when not actually hostile, to anything outside the narrow range of Islamic theology and its satellite disciplines, it is probable that many of the lost works are precisely those which in our eyes would do most honour to the Muslim civilization. There still remains an enormous mass of material, however, much of which, existing only in scattered manuscripts, has not yet been fully examined or made generally available. But while practically all extant works of importance are now becoming accessible to Arabists, comparatively few of them are at the service of Western scholarship in reliable translations, though the number is increasing every year.[1]

As those who could boast of pure Arab descent formed but a small minority of those who shared the Islamic civilization, so the Arab himself contributed the smaller share to its literature. Nevertheless it was permeated by modes of thought and expression derived from the country and impressed upon it by the people from which and through whom it issued as a conquering force in the seventh century of our era. Before we can proceed to our main subject, therefore, we must, in this chapter and that which follows, outline the physical and linguistic environment by which Arabic literature was moulded from the outset.

[1] A list of the chief translations into Western European languages will be found in the appendix, and the name of every author and book appearing on this list is marked with an asterisk.

Its birthplace was the sandy plain, partly steppeland, partly desert, of Central and North-eastern Arabia. Except in the rare oases the land, bare, monotonous, subject to violent alternations of heat and cold, drought and flood, was, and is, unable to support settled communities. Its inhabitants are of necessity nomadic, subsisting chiefly on the produce of their camels and sheep, and compelled to move unendingly from place to place in search of fresh pasturage. The monotony of their life is broken only by the fierce pleasures of years of plenty and the biting misery of years of famine, and by success or failure in their raids on one another or on the settled communities on their fringes. Their secular physical environment has moulded their habits, thought, and speech, impressing on them those repetitions and abrupt transitions which are reproduced in nearly all aspects of Arab life and literature. The circle of ideas bounding the horizon of such nomads is necessarily narrow; the struggle for existence is too severe to allow of attention to anything beyond the practical and material needs of the day, still less of interest in abstract conceptions and religious speculation. Their philosophy is summed up in a number of pithy sayings, their religion is a vague superstition. Their thought is expressed in terms of the concrete, and their language will contain few abstractions beyond those relating to simple activities and physical qualities.

As if to counterbalance this poverty of ideas, the uniformity of life and environment conduces to an exceedingly rich development of language in the realm of material life. Not only do synonyms abound, but every variety of natural phenomenon, however minute, and every separate activity, however complex, is expressed by a term proper to itself. This feature of language may be observed also to a greater or less extent in the speech of other peoples whose nomadic

habits and degree of civilization resemble those of the Badawin of Arabia, but Arabic is unique in having carried over its superluxuriant vocabulary to play an important part in the literature of a highly developed civilization.

The Arabic tongue, however, was not the peculiar possession of the nomads of Central and Northern Arabia. There existed also settled communities of North Arabs who had come into closer contact with more civilized peoples. Between the ancient civilization of Yaman, in the south-west corner of Arabia, and the frontier districts of Syria and Iraq there were constant commercial relations, which opened a way for cultural influences to penetrate into Central Arabia. Along the trade routes substantial communities grew up, such as Mecca, akin in blood and language to the nomads, and apparently but little distinguished from them in manners and outlook. At Ḥīra on the Euphrates, where an Arab dynasty reigned under Persian protection, and on the marches of Syria the Arabs were naturally brought into closer touch with the Christian Aramaic culture. From these sources a thin stream of Aramaic cultural terms found their way into Arabic, but made as little impression on the form and content of the language as the Aramaic culture made on the nomads themselves, condemned by nature to live in primitive simplicity or perish in the struggle for existence.

2. *The Arabic Language*

THE ancient languages of South-western Asia, of which Arabic is the youngest and, except for rare survivals, the only living representative, form a well-defined and independent family, known as the Semitic language-group. They are all closely interrelated and present such remarkable affinities in vocabulary and structure that they evidently possess a common origin. Within the family itself, however, there are several groups of dialects marked off by distinctive features, the accepted distribution (omitting minor dialects) being as follows:

A. The language of the Babylonian and Assyrian cuneiform inscriptions, generally known as Assyrian, or East Semitic.

B. The ancient languages of Syria and Mesopotamia, collectively termed North or North-western Semitic. These fall into two groups, an earlier and a later:
 (*a*) The Canaanite dialects, of which Phoenician and Hebrew are the most important;
 (*b*) Aramaic, the lingua franca of Western Asia for many centuries before and after the Christian era, together with Syriac, a Christian literary dialect of North-western Mesopotamia.

C. The languages of Arabia (South or South-western Semitic):
 (*a*) Northern Arabic, the literary Arabic of our study;
 (*b*) The ancient inscriptional dialects of South Arabia (Sabaean, Minean, &c.) with their offshoot, Ge'ez or Ethiopic, the ancient literary language of Abyssinia.

Many of these languages are little more than different literary dialects, the peculiarities of North Arabic being due, as might be expected, to the uniformity of desert life, which, while on the one hand favouring the survival of

many of the most primitive elements of the Semitic speech, tended also, as we have seen, towards an excessive elaboration in other respects. The majority of the dialects contain more or less alien elements, but in every case these have been subordinated to the distinctive features which mark off the Semitic languages. Some of these peculiarities, such as their complicated phonetic system and the almost complete absence of compound words, do not concern us here. The outstanding characteristic of the Semitic languages, however, is the root-system, and this we must examine in some detail, as without a knowledge of it several of the special features of Arabic literature would be unintelligible. For in Arabic, as in all other literatures, the canons of wit, elegance, and artistry in writing were dictated by the genius of the language.

Every primary conception in the Semitic languages is expressed by means of consonants only, and the vast majority by three consonants. These three consonants form the root. Primary modifications of the meaning are expressed by internal vowel variations, secondary modifications partly by the same method and partly by affixes and inserted consonants. Thus from the root Q T L, which conveys the idea of 'Killing', are formed the verb *qatala* (he killed) and the noun *qatl* (killing), the adjectival nouns *qātil* (a killer) and *qatīl* (one killed), and a number of other derivatives. Conversely every word whose root letters are Q T L will be connected in some way with the idea of killing. This method of narrowing down the signification of the root by intensive construction applies both to nouns and verbs, but whereas in the noun there is an exceedingly wide variety of forms, the verb has attained to a perfectly rigid system of formal development. From the simple verb (he killed) are formed an intensive (he slaughtered), a causative (he caused to kill or to be killed), and—in South Semitic only—a conative (he tried to kill, he fought with). In the fully-

developed Arabic scheme, each of these again may form a reflexive or middle, and there is in addition a quasi-passive of the simple form besides proper passives for each form. Few verbs possess the entire scheme, but nearly all roots receive some or other of these modifications.

It will be clear that, since this verbal scheme is invariable and admits of no exceptions, and since roots are all of three consonants, there exists in Arabic an enormous number of words whose vowel-schemes are exactly alike. Inevitably, therefore, rhyme plays a very large part in Arabic literary style from the first, not only in poetry but in prose as well. It is possible also to devise elaborate alliterative effects, while the *jeu de mots*, so far from being avoided, is regarded as a special ornament in belles-lettres and similar branches of literature.

The intensive modification of the root lends itself peculiarly to economy of words, and under its influence the form of expression in early Arabic poetry and prose alike is the concise and pregnant sentence. Few of the best known Arabic proverbs exceed three or four words, and it was considered a blemish in a poem if a sentence extended over more than a single verse. That 'Oriental floweriness' which has become a byword is foreign to natural Arabic expression and crept into later Arabic literature from external sources. Yet Arabic took to it kindly, and the rank luxuriance of its later phases was due to the unequalled opportunities for literary artifice which Arabic provided by its wealth of synonym and the minute variations we have already described. The older and more natural laconic form of expression, however, persisted and still persists in the spoken language and some departments of literature.

The brevity of Arabic style was further assisted by the wealth of its vocabulary and by another factor which derived

from the same causes. Bearing in mind the restricted mental horizon of the Arab, it is only to be expected that Arabic (with the Semitic languages generally) should be objective in its point of view and methods of expression. This is seen very clearly in its treatment of the verb. While the Indo-European languages have developed an elaborate scheme of tenses, the Semitic verb has retained the more primitive organization into two 'aspects', which primarily carry no connotation of time but denote simply that the action is completed or incomplete. This deficiency was remedied by recourse to an elaborate syntactical scheme which became rigid in later Arabic. The modal system of the Indo-European languages is also largely absent from the Semitic languages; literary (but not spoken) Arabic possesses only a subjunctive and a jussive, and these in a very restricted application. Thus the word *yaqtulu* expresses not only 'he kills', 'he will kill', and (in composition) 'he was killing', but also 'he may, might, would, or could kill', the exact force of the word in each case being determined by the context. By elaboration of the syntax, again, the mood can be expressed with precision, if it is felt to be necessary.

The presentation of the sentence is jerky or 'lyrical', lacking the ordered hierarchy of European syntax. The component parts are originally autonomous, seldom explicitly subordinated. Nevertheless, so far as literary Arabic is concerned, this absence of grammatical subordination is frequently exaggerated. From the time of the early poetry at least, the original autonomy of the separate clauses is replaced by a scheme of *logical* subordination which is perfectly uniform in its application. It is the combined effect of these unfamiliar methods of presenting ideas that gives Arabic an appearance of harshness and inadequacy in the eyes of Europeans who have not thoroughly grasped their interrelation.

This difficulty is enhanced by the fact that, the consonantal structure of the words and the general syntactical scheme being regarded as sufficient to determine the sense, it is not considered necessary to insert the vowels in writing. Hence, as it has been put, an Arabic text contains only seventy-five per cent. of the meaning and the remaining twenty-five per cent. has to be supplied by the reader. It is possible, in consequence, to know the meaning of every word in a sentence and to understand its syntactical construction, and yet to hesitate between two totally different interpretations. Nor is it merely the European scholar who is handicapped in this way; even the native scholar will fall frequently into error unless he has access to the oral tradition which supplements the written text. All this is, of course, exclusive of the natural lexicographical difficulties and of textual errors due to the ignorance or carelessness of the transcriber, to which Arabic, owing to the peculiarities of its script, is even more liable than other manuscript literatures.

3. *The Heroic Age* (*c.* A.D. 500–622)

LIKE most of the world's great literatures Arabic literature springs into existence with an outburst of poetry. With Homeric suddenness, but even surpassing Homer in metrical complexity and elaboration of technique, it flowers almost simultaneously over a wide area of Northern Arabia. The earliest poets whose works have come down to us belong to the first half of the sixth century, and they already exhibit a flexibility and command of language which their successors never outstripped. Of the long period of germination and experiment which necessarily went before practically nothing is known to us.

The origin of Arabic poetry has been traced through a simple iambic metre back (like the *carmen*) to short comminatory utterances in rhymed prose (*saj'*), regarded as possessing magical powers. The story of Balaam is the most familiar example of this conception of the poet's function; nevertheless no other Semitic language has a poetry even remotely resembling that of the pre-Islamic Arabs. The origin of its sixteen metres, with their highly complex distribution of feet, is still obscure. An explanation given by native philologists and accepted in part by some modern scholars is that they were suggested in the first place by the rhythmic movements of the camel's tread; certain it is that the early poetry was most cultivated in those tribes which were least under civilized influence. Apart from the metres the chief external characteristic of Arabic poetry is that the same rhyme runs through the whole poem, which in the case of the most elaborate form, the *Qaṣīda* or ode, numbers sixty to a hundred lines.

The relation of the language of the poems to the spoken language of the tribes is an interesting and still unsolved problem. On the one hand it is held that they were practi-

cally identical ; on the other that the poets used a standardized poetic dialect which was based on the spoken dialects but distinguished from them by refinements of vocabulary, inflexion, and syntactical articulation. The theory of an *artificial* poetic dialect is untenable for many reasons ; it is probable, however, that the poets greatly enriched the language by absorption of dialect forms, and that they helped to fix its usages. The syntactical construction of the poems especially attains a degree of refinement unknown to any other Semitic language, while the syntax of spoken Arabic has at all times been loose and suggestive rather than explicit. It is doubtful even whether this literary dialect was used throughout the whole of Arabia until a comparatively late period, when, as we shall see, it set the standard for all subsequent Arabic literature.

The uncertainty which surrounds their language is partly due to the fact that, as there was little written poetry until well into the eighth century, the poems were transmitted orally for some two centuries before being written down. In the course of transmission they must have suffered a certain amount of revision, however unintentionally, by the substitution of newer phrases for archaisms and the pruning away of various traces of dialect, though the exigencies of the metrical forms probably prevented all but minor alterations. The poems were handed down through successive generations of reciters called *rāwīs*. In earlier times the *rāwī* was himself a poet who served his apprenticeship, as it were, by accompanying an older contemporary as his reciter, but a class of professional reciters gradually grew up. Many stories are related of the prodigious memories of certain famous *rāwīs*, one of whom is said to have recited on one occasion two thousand nine hundred long poems at a single sitting. In spite of such powers of memory it was of course inevitable

that errors should creep in. The peculiar structure of the Arabic poem lent itself to omissions or misplacements of verses, and even to transfers from one poem or poet to another. There was a tendency for the oldest poetry to drop out of currency or suffer remodelling, and the historical origins and circumstances of many poems (without knowing which it is often impossible to understand the poem) were forgotten or invented. Nor were all *rāwīs* proof against the temptation to attribute poems of their own composition or of some obscure author to famous poets of the past. Yet, notwithstanding all these sources of error, there can be no doubt that the great bulk of the ancient Arabic poetry which has come down to us is substantially authentic. What we still possess is little in comparison with what has perished, but it includes at least all those works which have been most highly esteemed by every generation of native critics.

The first place has always been given to the **Muʿallaqāt* (a name whose meaning has not yet been satisfactorily explained), a collection of seven odes made by a *rāwī* of the eighth century, to which three other odes are commonly appended. The ten poems are by as many hands, and each is regarded as its author's masterpiece. The poets represented in the collection are the masters of Arabian poetry during the sixth century; in addition to these poems we have also the *dīwān* or collected poetical works of each of the ten and of several other poets. A more elaborate collection contemporary with the *Muʿallaqāt*, and named after its compiler (the philologist al-Mufaḍḍal) the **Mufaḍḍalīyāt*, contains some 120 odes and fragments, chiefly from the lesser pre-Islamic poets. There are also a number of later collections of less celebrity and more doubtful authenticity. Besides these dīwāns and collections of odes there are numerous anthologies of excerpts and short occasional pieces. The

most famous is the **Dīwān al-Ḥamāsa* (Poems of Bravery) compiled by Abū Tammām (p. 43), himself a poet of some note in the ninth century. The collection, which has been rendered in spirited German verse by Rückert, is divided into ten sections on different subjects, the first and longest of which has given its name to the work. Another anthology bearing the same title was made by the poet al-Buḥturī some years later. Excerpts from the ancient poems are contained also in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (Book of Songs) of Abu'l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (*d.* 967), a vast and most valuable collection of biographies from which most of our knowledge of ancient Arabian society and manners is drawn; in the *Book of Poems and Poets* of the philologist Ibn Qutayba (p. 55), considered by some authorities the best anthology of Arabic poetry; and in many other works of philology and belles-lettres.

On a first reading the ancient poetry gives an impression of monotony and bareness. Its subjects are limited by the horizon of desert Arabia, its ideas by the atmosphere and ideals of Badawin society. It mirrors the uniformity of desert life, its concreteness, realism, absence of shading and of subjective feeling. From this arises the lack of interest and inventiveness with which it is often charged. Those who read it in translation see in it little but servile and meritless imitations of a standard type, excepting only some short occasional poems, chiefly elegies and battle-pieces, which appeal more strongly to our Western taste. In so doing they completely misunderstand the purpose of the poet. He did not seek to strike out new paths and captivate his audience by his originality and range of ideas; had he done so he would have outstripped their comprehension. His aim was, working on a given theme along narrowly defined lines, to embellish that theme with all the art at his command, to surpass his predecessors and rivals in beauty, expressiveness,

terseness of phrase, in fidelity of description and grasp of reality. Old Arabic poetry can never be satisfactorily translated into any other language, just because the thing said varies so little and the whole art lies in the untranslatable manner of saying it. It is only after long acquaintance and study, already difficult to the later Arabs and a lifework for Europeans, that the individuality of the poets can be discerned.

The standard type of the finished poem is the *Qaṣīda* or Ode, consisting in a series of pictures conveying different aspects of Arabian life, loosely bound together in a conventional order. Whatever the main subject of the poem may be, the poet is free to reach it only after a fixed series of stages (one or more of which, however, he may abridge).

'In the opening lines the poet is supposed to be travelling on a camel with one or two companions. The road leads him to the site of a former encampment of his own or a friendly tribe, the remains of which are still visible. He beseeches his companions to halt for a moment, and sorrowfully recalls how, many years ago, he spent here the happiest days of his life with his beloved. Now life with its constant wanderings has long since separated them, and over the deserted scene roams the wild antelope.'[1]

> Stay! let us weep, while memory tries to trace
> The long-lost fair one's sand-girt dwelling-place;
> Though the rude winds have swept the sandy plain,
> Still some faint traces of that spot remain.
> My comrades reined their coursers by my side,
> And 'Yield not, yield not to despair' they cried.
> (Tears were my sole reply; yet what avail
> Tears shed on sands, or sighs upon the gale?)[2]

This section is often expanded by a description of the beloved in more or less detail:

> 'Twas then her beauties first enslaved my heart—
> Those glittering pearls and ruby lips, whose kiss

[1] Freely after Kratchkowsky, *Vostok*, iv. 101.

[2] From a translation of the *Mu'allaqa* of Imru'ul-Qays quoted by Clouston, *Arabian Poetry*, p. 373.

Was sweeter far than honey to the taste.
As when the merchant opes a precious box
Of perfume, such an odour from her breath
Came toward thee, harbinger of her approach;
Or like an untouched meadow, where the rain
Hath fallen freshly on the fragrant herbs
That carpet all its pure untrodden soil:
A meadow where the frequent rain-drops fall
Like coins of silver in the quiet pools,
And irrigate it with perpetual streams;
A meadow where the sportive insects hum,
Like listless topers singing o'er their cups.[1]

After the amatory prelude (called *nasīb*) the poet, recollecting himself, pursues his journey and seizes the occasion to describe, with all an expert's enthusiasm, his camel or horse. The swiftness of its gait leads him to compare it to a wild ass, ostrich, or oryx, but the comparison is soon forgotten as the theme is developed into a lively picture of animal life or of a hunting scene, which to Western taste is often the most attractive section of the poem.

She, the white cow, shone there through the dark night luminous,
like a pearl of deep-seas, freed from the string of it.
Thus till morn, till day-dawn folded back night's canopy; then she
fled bewildered, sliding the feet of her. . . .
Voices now she hears near, human tones, they startle her, though to
her eye naught is: Man! he, the bane of her!
Seeketh a safe issue, the forenoon through listening, now in front,
behind now, fearing her enemy.
And they failed, the archers. Loosed they then to deal with her
fine-trained hounds, the lop-eared, slender the sides of them.
These outran her lightly. Turned she swift her horns on them, like
twin spears of Sámhar, sharp-set the points of them.

[1] From the *Mu'allaqa* of 'Antara, translated by E. H. Palmer in 'The Song of the Reed'.

Well she knew her danger, knew if her fence failed with them hers must be the red death. Hence her wrath's strategy.
And she slew Kasábi, foremost hound of all of them, stretched the brach in blood there, ay, and Sukhám of them.[1]

Only after this, as a rule, does the poet break into the subject proper of his poem. By the use of carefully selected epithets he unfolds to his audience a series of portraits of tribal life, a scene of revel, or a desert thunderstorm; he extols his own bravery or defiantly proclaims the glorious deeds of his tribe; he sings the praises of his patron and lauds his generosity; in exultant tones he describes a battle or a successful raid; or he summarizes the ethics of the desert in a vein of didactic pessimism. These motives, together with elegies (for which a number of poetesses are specially famed), songs of revenge, and satires, constitute practically the entire repertory of subjects of the old poetry. It will readily be seen how easy it was for the later anthologists to detach a section from the loose framework of the ode and treat it as an independent poem.

It must be sufficient here to refer very briefly to a few typical figures. Among the poets of the desert first place in point of time and also, in the opinion of many critics, in merit belongs to *Imru'ul-Qays, 'the leader of the poets to hell-fire' in the eyes of early Muslim puritanism. The dissolute and exiled son of the ruler of a precarious Arabian kingdom, he spent his later years in unavailing efforts to avenge his father's death and restore his vanished kingdom. His *Mu'allaqa*, with a fine picture of a storm, illustrates his gift for natural descriptions as well as the frankness of his amatory verse. The self-centredness that marks his work finds its most intense expression, however, in the robber poets, Ta'abbaṭa

[1] From the *Mu'allaqa* of Labīd, in W. S. Blunt's *Seven Golden Odes*. In this passage both the phrasing and rhythm of the Arabic are closely followed.

Sharra and ash-Shanfarā. The former's **Song of Revenge* and Shanfarā's **Poem rhyming in L*, a brilliant kaleidoscope of desert life, are two of the most famous and most frequently translated Arabic poems. Elsewhere Ta'abbaṭa Sharra has portrayed in his terse and pungent style his own ideal:[1]

Nor exults he nor complains he; silent bears whate'er befalls him,
Much desiring, much attempting; far the wanderings of his venture.
In one desert noon beholds him; evening finds him in another;
As the wild ass lone he crosses o'er the jagged and headlong ridges.
Swifter than the wind unpausing, onward yet, nor rest nor slackness,
While the howling gusts outspeeded in the distance moan and falter,
Light the slumber on his eyelids, yet too heavy all he deems it;
Ever watchful for the moment when to draw the bitter faulchion;
When to plunge it in the heart-blood of the many-mustered foemen.

The majority of the Badawi poets sink their personality in that of the tribe to which they belong or have attached themselves. Each vaunts its freedom and irresistible might, rising to a climax of boasts that must surely have raised a smile.

Ours is the earth and all thereon; we grasp
Whate'er, whene'er we please . . .
Earth grows too narrow for our warrior hosts,
Our galleys scour the seas.[2]

A different note is struck by Zuhayr, most of whose *dīwān* is devoted to the praises of two chiefs who had composed a fratricidal feud. He stands out, as befits an old man, as the mouthpiece of Badawi ethics, expressing in his didactic poetry nearly the whole range of their moral ideals.

Another group of poets is formed by those who, while remaining true Badawin, came under the influence of the civilized communities in the Yaman, and more especially of those in the north. The kings of Ḥīra, recognizing in the poets the leaders of public opinion in Arabia, encouraged them

[1] Translated by W. G. Palgrave, *Essays on Eastern Questions*, p. 312.
[2] From the *Mu'allaqa* of 'Amr ibn Kulthūm.

by lavish rewards to visit their court, in the hope of extending thereby their own influence among the nomads. The same practice was adopted by the rivals of Ḥīra, the Christian Ghassānid kings in Transjordan, who had acquired some of the polish of Byzantine culture. Through these poets the Aramaic culture was to some extent passed on to the nomads. The most famous of them is *an-Nābigha of Dhubyān, whose poetry is invaded by a serious moral and didactic tone which betrays the influences of his residence at both courts and gave rise to the tradition that he became a Christian. Yet how superficial after all these influences were may be seen in the poems of his younger contemporary al-A'shā, the professional troubadour, who 'sums up in himself all the elements of culture then current in Arabia'. His fame rests on his satires and revel-poems, whose gaiety, in spite of his contacts with the Christian communities north and south, is clouded by none of the seriousness of Nābigha. It should not be forgotten, too, that both the agricultural Judaized tribes in the Ḥijāz and the townsmen also had their poets, but of these, as of the somewhat different poetry of Ḥīra itself, little has survived, though the latter exercised some influence on the Arabic poetry of the next century.

The most important cultural service which the poets rendered was that by their realization of a distinction between Arab and non-Arab they overstepped the narrow tribal limits and created a new consciousness of Arab nationhood. It was this national feeling which, intensified by subsequent events, was to find expression in the great movement of expansion which broke out with startling suddenness when once the cities, with their greater powers of organization, supplied the cohesive force which was so marked a deficiency in the tribal society.

4. *The Age of Expansion* (A.D. 622–750)

THE influences which were being brought to bear on the nomads through the poets were active also in the towns, though in a different fashion. The townsmen, while they preserved the primitive clan organization, had gained a wider outlook as a result of their commercial intercourse with the north and the south. The trading centres of the Ḥijāz and of Najd were the natural foci for the cultural elements that were invading the peninsula, and Christian and Jewish propaganda was at work to strengthen the impression made upon them by their contacts with the civilized world. The poetry of Umayya of Ṭā'if (if indeed his verse be genuine) expresses the dissatisfaction felt by thoughtful men with the barren superstitions of their ancestors.

While the settlements of Najd exercised at most only an indirect influence on Arabic literature, at Mecca the reform movement gathered force and finally took shape in the teachings of Muḥammad b. 'Abdullāh, a humble member of the ruling clan, the Quraysh. His life has been so overlaid by later traditions that little is known of him prior to the opening of his mission. He had lived as a child among the nomads and as a young man had visited Syria with the trade caravans. In middle life he seems to have given himself up to deep and often solitary meditations over a long period of years. At length he felt called to proclaim to his fellow citizens his profound conviction of the power and majesty of the One God and of the impending judgement when all who had rebelled against His laws should be cast into the fire of Hell. After ten years of constant struggle he had succeeded in collecting only a very small band of followers, when an

opportune invitation to compose the feuds that were raging in the town of Yathrib offered a new field of action. In 622, a date that became the era of the new community, already known as *Muslims*, he with the bulk of his followers made his emigration (*hijrah*) to Yathrib, henceforth to be known as al-Madīna, the City of the Prophet. For eight years he maintained an armed struggle with Mecca and the Badawin tribes of North-west Arabia, imposing his authority on one after another until at length Mecca itself capitulated in 630. Henceforth his rule was undisputed in Western Arabia, and the two years of life that remained to him saw deputations from all parts of the peninsula flock to Madīna to tender their submission or enlist his aid in the factional struggles that rent their tribes.

It was not until after Muḥammad's death that his followers compiled his discourses, chiefly from memory, into a single volume, known as the Koran (*al-Qur'ān*, literally 'The Reading'). No serious doubt has ever been cast on the authenticity of the collection, the very haphazardness of the compilation, apart from internal evidence, being a proof of its genuineness. No attempt was made to arrange the fragments, either chronologically or in order of content; earlier and later sections, moral discourses and legal provisions, are placed side by side even in the same chapter (*sūra*) in the most disconcerting fashion. Both Muslim and European scholars have set themselves the task of determining the chronological order of the passages, and it is now possible to re-arrange them with a fair approximation to certainty.

To Muslims the Koran is the very Speech of God, revealed word for word to His Prophet Muḥammad through the angel Gabriel. For them there can be no question of earlier and later styles, phraseology, or doctrine, but the European student, recognizing in it the handiwork of Muḥammad the

man, finds its chief interest in the way it reveals the gradual development of a fascinating personality and the stages by which his early teaching expanded into a new religion.

In the earliest portions of the Koran the reader has the feeling that Muḥammad is struggling with ideas that are beyond his powers of utterance. He was not a practised speaker, nor could he find to his hand words to express the new message he felt impelled to deliver. The gift of words came with practice, but to the very end the Koran retains the crudities of expression that were forced upon it from the beginning by the lack of means to express philosophic concepts. Muḥammad's next difficulty was to evolve a suitable style. The literary language had hitherto been applied only to poetry and lyrical utterances in rhymed prose. As this was the highest form of expression known to the Arabs, Muḥammad had no alternative but to adopt the rhymed prose style, and the earliest sections of the Koran are accordingly brief, semi-lyrical exhortations, often of great power and beauty. Together with the style Muḥammad adopted also many of the literary artifices which went with it, such as the elaborate oath-formulae prefixed to several of the *sūras* (e. g. 'By the constellated Sky! By the promised Day! By the Witness and the Witnessed!'). His people naturally classed him with the poets and soothsayers, who, in the common belief, were inspired by genii (*Jinn*). The necessity of dispelling this opinion, together with his growing command of language, led him by degrees to adopt a less lyrical style. This process was assisted by the gradual change in the subject-matter of the revelations, which, beginning with prophetic warnings, denunciations, and vaguely conceived theological teachings, passed into narratives relating to former prophets (derived chiefly from Jewish sources), and finally, in the Madīna period, to topical addresses and legal prescriptions. The

latest *sūras* are thus in simple prose, except only for final rhymes of a loose sort.

As a literary monument the Koran is unique. Few achievements are more remarkable than the development, in the course of a single book, of a prose style out of a poetic dialect. Muslims of all ages are united in proclaiming the inimitability not only of its contents but of its style. But, as in the case of the old poetry, the very qualities which give it its literary distinction render it impossible to translate with any success into another language, and Islamic orthodoxy wisely discountenances any attempt to do so. The striking language becomes vapid, the grammatical forms lose all their suggestiveness, the rhetorically phrased sentences become shapeless, and little is left but seemingly crude conceptions strung loosely together without life or artistry.

The influence of the Koran on the development of Arabic literature has been incalculable. Though for several decades at least there was no other prose work written in Arabic and it exercised little immediate influence on the poets, it was to the studies connected with the Koran that the majority of branches of Arabic literature owed their origin. Moreover, though the standard of literary Arabic was in fact set not by the Koran but by the heathen poets, it was due to the position of the Koran as 'Bible, Prayer-book, delectus, and first law-book to Muslims of whatever sect' that Arabic became a world-language and the common literary medium of all Muslim peoples. For the greater part of the period comprised in this chapter the work of studying the sacred text and of collecting the materials to assist in its elucidation went steadily forward, not itself leaving much mark on Arabic literature, but laying the foundation for the apparently sudden outburst that marks the early years of the next period.

Before tracing this development it is necessary to explain

briefly the historical circumstances that contributed to it. Under Muḥammad's successors the Arabs, possessing for the first time a common rallying-cry and a central organization to direct their movements, swept out of Arabia into Syria and Iraq and shattered, with the aid of his disaffected subjects, the armies of the Emperor Heraclius and the exhausted power of Sasanid Persia. Thence in a series of rapid bounds they conquered Egypt, Eastern Persia, the North African littoral, and within a century were masters of an Empire extending from the Pyrenees to the Pamir. The organization of the new empire lies outside our scope, but the resulting redistribution of forces is of great importance for the history of Muslim religion and literature. The early theocratic organization of Madīna proved insufficient for the government of so vast a territory, and the civil capital of the Empire was transferred to Damascus, under the rule of the Umayyad dynasty, a Meccan family akin to the Prophet but imbued with political conceptions which squared ill with the views of the theocratic party. Madīna, however, remained the centre of religious learning, and it was there that the foundations of the 'Muslim sciences' (i. e. those connected with the study of the Koran) were laid. Mecca, on the other hand, enriched by the conquests and by its widening importance as the city of pilgrimage, rapidly developed habits of luxury and pleasure-seeking which were a scandal to the faithful. Central Arabia suffered the most striking change of all. Its most vigorous elements had joined the Muslim armies and returned to Arabia no more. The greater part of them settled in Mesopotamia and thence spread eastwards; smaller parties were scattered from Egypt as far as Spain. While they retained for the most part their nomadic habits, many of them eventually adopted settled life in the cities and on the land. There is no cause for surprise, therefore, that the true suc-

cessors of the ancient poets almost all hail from Mesopotamia and rarely indeed from Arabia.

But the most vital result of the Arab conquests was the gradual absorption of the conquered peoples into the Islamic community. With them they brought the experience and habits of their distinctive civilizations and thus carried Arabic literature and thought to a stage of development beyond the unaided powers of the Arabs. It was not, however, until the close of our present period that their influence began to be felt. With few exceptions the studies which were carried on during the first century of the Muslim era were carried on by Arabs, though it was partly the influx of such numbers of non-Arabic-speaking peoples into the Muslim community that led to the first steps in the development of the 'Muslim sciences'.

At the time when the Sacred Book was compiled, Arabic was written in a very imperfect script which was all but unreadable to those who did not possess an exhaustive knowledge of the language. It became a matter of urgency to preserve the text from corruption by establishing firstly a more adequate script, and in the second place the rules of Arabic grammar. As this need was most felt in the former Persian provinces the first attempts to meet it were made in the garrison cities of Iraq. The interpretation of the Koran also demanded careful study of its grammatical structure and vocabulary. Exact shades of meaning were defined by reference to the pre-Islamic poets, necessitating the collection and memorizing of their works. In this way arose the twin sciences of philology and lexicography, which were in consequence really based not on the Koran itself but on the ancient poetry. The application of Koranic passages was fixed by recollections of actions or sayings of the Prophet which had some bearing on the subject or the text. Rules

for the conduct of life and affairs were also sought in the practice of the Prophet, and thus there came into being the most characteristic of Muslim literary activities, the science of Tradition. The study of the Koran and the Tradition supplied the basis upon which Theology and Jurisprudence, the obverse and reverse of the Sacred Law, were built. Though Madīna was still the centre of these studies, there is abundant evidence that they were pursued also in circles which were less sealed to foreign influences, both in Syria and in Iraq.

Two branches of the Muslim sciences further converged to lay the foundations of a study which soon overstepped their limits, that of History. On the one hand philological studies entailed some researches into the history of pre-Islamic Arabia, as well as into the genealogies of the tribes. The demand produced the supply ; narratives professing to relate the 'origins' and early history of the Arabs were concocted out of legends and vague traditions, probably filled out by borrowings from Judaeo-Christian sources and by pure invention. Several of these works, compiled by Arabs from Yaman, enjoyed great popularity in secular circles, especially at the court. On the other hand the Tradition necessarily included much historical matter, chiefly in connexion with the Prophet's military expeditions (*maghāzī*). In spite of the opposition of the theologians many students began to make a separate study of these historical traditions, and before the close of this period the first works on the subject were already in circulation. By their nature these works were more authentic than the old legends, and it was out of them that the later science of History was evolved.

The literary remains of all this activity are negligible, chiefly because at this stage all instruction was oral and there was a strong theological prejudice against putting anything on paper except the Koran. The prohibition was most

effective in the sphere of religious studies, which were of course those most pursued. Nevertheless, small private collections of traditions and poems were formed, and one at least of the former is still extant. The written historical or pseudo-historical works naturally passed out of circulation after their contents had been incorporated in later works. It is possible also that a further obstacle to the growth of a literature at this early period was that prose as a literary medium was still in its infancy. The Koran, on stylistic and theological grounds, was ruled out as a model, and the history of other literatures shows that the development of a natural prose style is the result of a long process of experiment.

Turning now to the poetry of this period, we find a totally different situation. The rise of Islam reacted unfavourably on the old poetry. Muḥammad himself, though he had his court poet, Ḥassān ibn Thābit, whose mediocre verse has thus been preserved when much finer work has perished, inevitably adopted a hostile attitude to it, as the chief moral force behind the pagan ideals which Islam had come to destroy. The early Muslim community and the theologians maintained this attitude after him. From this arises the astonishing fact that the birth and expansion of Islam inspired no poet in that nation of poets, and that the description of the Islamic movement in the grand manner of the ancient verse is limited to a single *ode by Ka'b, the son of that Zuhayr mentioned above as one of the chief didactic poets. Even the great poets already active in Arabia were reduced to silence; *Labīd, who combines in his work the expression of all that was best in the old Arabian life and who is represented in the *Mu'allaqāt*, lived more than thirty years into the era of the Hijra, but ceased to compose after his adhesion to Islam.

Before long, however, a feature so ingrained was bound to

reassert itself. No longer in Arabia but in Mesopotamia the old poetry reappeared, in the traditional setting and the old conventions, its spirit moreover but slightly affected by the ideals of the new faith. Banned by the theologians, the poets found a ready welcome at the courts of the Umayyads and their Arab amīrs, and there they recited, as their predecessors at the courts of Ḥīra and Ghassān, their *qaṣīdas* in praise of their patrons, in boast of their tribes, or in abuse of their rivals. The three masters of their art, who yield nothing to the pre-Islamic poets in style and technique, were al-Akhtal, Jarīr, and *Farazdaq. All three were contemporaries; the first belonged to a Christian tribe and was thereby the readier to serve the Umayyads against the theocratic party; the second and third acquired their fame chiefly by the energy and command of language they displayed in a poetic feud which at one time divided the Arabs of the Eastern provinces into two partisan camps. But the *qaṣīda* was becoming a worn-out form; the narrow conventions, cramping even in the desert, tightened into a halter under the new conditions. The difficulty, as has been pointed out, was that the old form of *qaṣīda* was not susceptible of minor changes; it had either to be maintained in its entirety or a wholly new form developed. By the end of the Umayyad period it was already dying out as a living vehicle of poetic thought and becoming an archaic exercise, a mosaic of expressions and images derived from the ancient bards. Such, for example, is the work of Dhu'r-Rumma, surnamed 'the last of the poets'. The *qaṣīda* continued to exist, still exists indeed, but purely as a pedantic exercise for philologists.

The first steps towards emancipation were taken in the refined atmosphere of Mecca. It is possible that the inspiration came originally from the Persian, and perhaps Greek, singers who gathered there in the service of the wealthy aristocracy.

However that may have been, it was out of the *nasīb* (amatory prelude) of the *qaṣīda* that the love-lyric developed as an independent poem. Its most brilliant exponent and the most remarkable of all the poets of the Umayyad age was the Qurayshite *'Omar b. Abī Rabī'a (*d. c.* 720), 'the Don Juan of Mecca, the Ovid of Arabia and the East'. His poems, which breathe a tenderness as far removed from the primitive passion of Imru'ul-Qays as from the hothouse sentiment of a later age, are written in simple unpretentious language. The austere were scandalized, and the poet paid for his temerity by more than one exile, but contemporaries and later generations alike were haunted by the joyous youth, the freshness and chivalry of 'Omar's verse.

> Ah for the throes of a heart sorely wounded!
> Ah for the eyes that have smit me with madness!
> Gently she moved in the calmness of beauty,
> Moved as the bough to the light breeze of morning.
> Dazzled my eyes as they gazed, till before me
> All was a mist and confusion of figures.
> Ne'er had I sought her, and ne'er had she sought me;
> Fated the love, and the hour, and the meeting.[1]

Other motives of the *qaṣīda* were similarly developed into revel-songs, hunting-songs, and the like. Of the many poets famed for this art only two need be mentioned here; Majnūn, 'the distracted one', whose love for Laylā became one of the stock themes of the later romantic poets; and the Umayyad Caliph Walīd II, famed chiefly for his wine-songs in the former tradition of Ḥīra, whose profligate life, cut short in 743 by a revolt, paved the way for the downfall of his dynasty and the opening of a new era alike in Muslim history and Arabic literature.

[1] Translated by W. G. Palgrave (see Appendix).

5. *The Golden Age* (A.D. 750–1055)

THE new dynasty which assumed the headship of the Muhammadan world in 750, the Abbāsids, owed their elevation to alliance with the theocratic and legitimist parties among the Arabs and the support of the Persians and other subject-peoples. Self-interest, if nothing else, urged them to patronize the theological sciences and at the same time to encourage the talents of their Persian and Aramaean subjects. For three centuries this remained the constant tradition of the Caliphate and its provincial courts, as well as of the local Persian and Arab dynasties who supplanted the latter. The new capital Baghdād became the centre of literature and the arts, 'the market', as an Arab historian puts it, 'to which the wares of the sciences and arts were brought, where wisdom was sought as a man seeks after his stray camels, and whose judgement of values was accepted by the whole world'. The simultaneous outburst of literary activity had, as we have seen, its roots in the preceding period. By their unification of the Empire in government and language, and the consequent extension of the Muhammadan religion among their subjects, the Umayyads created the material conditions of which their successors reaped the advantage. The material which the humanist revival was to use was already being systematized; the new culture was already burgeoning, but the Abbāsids by their tolerance and patronage gave it fuller scope and largely contributed to its splendour.

From this point the former subject-peoples take their place in every department of life and literature alongside the Arabs, each bringing the distinctive features of their culture to enrich the whole. From the time of Alexander all the civilized lands of the Near East had been profoundly influenced by Hellenism.

Out of the resulting action and reaction arose a distinctively Eastern branch of Hellenistic thought, which found expression in Alexandrian philosophy and the Eastern Christian schisms. From the fourth century the Greek philosophers and their Neoplatonic commentators, the Greek astronomers, physicians, and scientists, were translated into Syriac and studied in the schools and monasteries of Syria and Mesopotamia. There still existed also a pagan community in Northern Mesopotamia, who, under the name of 'Ṣabians', rendered great services to Muslim literature and science. In Egypt the Alexandrian schools of philosophy, medicine, and astronomy, though sadly diminished, remained sufficiently active to influence the work of the Muslims in the two latter sciences. This Hellenistic atmosphere also favoured the propagation of the gnostic cults, a wide variety of eclectic systems strongly tinged with dualistic and Pythagorean teachings.

These were the contributions of the Aramaic and Hellenized peoples to Muslim literature and thought. Far less important was the material contribution of the Persians. The Sasanid empire, cut off from the mainstream of Hellenistic culture, had little indigenous culture to put in its place. It is true that in later times a movement of literary nationalism in Persia sought to magnify the old Persian civilization at the expense of the Arabs, and to claim for Persia the origin of nearly everything of value in Muslim culture. But Persia, groaning under the oppressive alliance of priesthood and bureaucracy and constantly in arms to defend its existence, had little leisure for literature, and what there was, if we may judge by its scanty survivals, was chiefly of a religious or legal sort, together with legendary stories of the ancient days and the founders of the dynasty. In the neighbourhood of the capital, however, Hellenistic influences, spread by the Nestorians, had led to the founding of a school at Jundī-Shābūr, where the main

subjects of study were again Greek philosophy and science, taught mainly by Nestorians. Alongside these, Indian philosophical and scientific works were translated and studied, and certain Iranian elements, both Mazdean and Manichaean, combined with the rest to form a peculiar syncretistic philosophy. The influence of this school was naturally strongest in Iraq, where it, with the earlier Gnostic syncretisms, was in a most favourable position to affect Islamic studies. Stronger Indian influences were introduced into the Muslim world by another Iranian community, of more mixed descent, which had been in prolonged contact with Buddhism in Bactria and Sogdiana. The too-commonly accepted theory that the richer developments of Muslim culture and religious thought or of Arabic literature were due to the Iranians and represent aspects of an 'Aryan reaction against Semitic ideas' is an over-generalization from certain special cases. In Persia even at that time there could be as little question of racial purity as of a specifically 'Aryan' culture.[1] Her main contribution was not literary, scientific, or philosophical, but the artistic temperament and natural genius and power of assimilation of her people, that found their finest expression under the stimulus of Islam.

It will now be plain why, with the change of dynasty, Arabic literature suddenly reached its Golden Age. Hitherto Muslim learning had been built up entirely by Arabs on an original plan, with at most indirect influence from the older centres of culture. At the hospitable court of the first Abbasid Caliphs it not only came face to face with foreign systems of thought, but, what was even more important, began to be studied by men whose whole mental outlook had for generations been moulded by Hellenism in one or other of its oriental offshoots. The immediate result was not unlike that produced by the reintroduction of Greek literature into Europe at the

[1] Cf. L. Massignon, *Lexique de la Mystique musulmane*, p. 46.

Renaissance. The two streams, coming into conflict, at once engaged in a struggle for supremacy. The final issue was not long in doubt, but in the effervescence the specifically Muslim sciences were bound to suffer some modification in methods, outlook, and expression. The scholars of Arabia, Syria, Egypt, and Persia, hitherto confined to their narrow provincial spheres, found a new freedom of circulation, and from their interaction at Baghdad and elsewhere sprang the Arabic literature of Islam. Every new development was carried rapidly to all corners of the Muslim world, and we find Spanish schools founded by scholars from the East and Persian schools founded by men who had studied in Egypt and Baghdad.

Of all these foreign influences that of Hellenism was clearly the most vital. Before passing on to treat of the development of Arabic literature in detail, however, we must note exactly what aspects of Hellenic and Hellenistic thought played the greatest part in it. The Muslims did not draw directly on Greek literature (as Europe did at the Renaissance) but received it through the medium of Syriac translations. The chief stimulus was undoubtedly supplied by the *Isagoge* of Porphyrius and Aristotle's *Organon*. This was adopted practically as a whole and is still taught in Muslim schools. In the next place came Greek philosophy, but in an imperfect form, as we shall see later. Greek medicine, represented chiefly by Galen and Paul of Aegina, and Greek physics and mathematics formed the basis of the corresponding Muslim sciences. But the Arabs never came into contact with Greek literature as a whole; ignorant of its intellectual and aesthetic qualities, they cared only for its material content of fact and theory. It may be doubted whether the narrowness of mind that pervades Arabic literature, the insistence on the letter and neglect of the spirit, would have allowed them to understand these qualities had they possessed a wider knowledge of Greek;

it is enough to note that the opportunity was denied them. Tied hand and foot by its own conventions, by its dependence upon patronage, and by that characteristic oriental reverence for the past which urges the poet or philosopher to sink his own personality in the inherited traditions of the race, it is not surprising that rarely indeed does any Arabic work rise above its environment and stand out as a living and permanent contribution to the literature of mankind.

The period covered in this chapter falls naturally into four divisions. The first, up to and including the reign of Hārūn ar-Rashīd (*d.* 809), covers the rich new developments of Arabic literature. Following this, the reigns of al-Ma'mūn (*d.* 833) and his successors mark the apogee of Greek influence. From 850 to 950 Arabic literature is overshadowed by the orthodox reaction. All these movements centre on Baghdad, but in the following century, consequent upon the political decentralization, various local centres challenge the supremacy of the capital.

§ 1. (*From* A.D. 750 *to* 813)

It was natural that the branches of literature which first came into prominence were those which linked on most closely to the studies pursued in the Umayyad period. Practically all the early prose works derive either from the study of Tradition or from that of philology, not, however, in the narrow sense of the terms, but as the basis of a wider range of activities. It was in the circles of the philologists in particular that literary prose, clear, precise, and well-articulated, first appears in Arabic.

Though Arabic philology undoubtedly arose out of the study of the Koran, it has been clearly shown that it was systematized, as it developed in Baṣra under the influence of the eclectic school of Jundī-Shābūr, on a totally different

basis, the principal agent in which was the Aristotelian logic. The beginnings of the school of Baṣra are hidden in darkness. We hear vaguely of one or two names in the Umayyad period, but it is not until close on the turn of the century that we find definite historical figures. The first systematic expositions were made by al-Khalīl (*d.* 791), an Arab from Oman. On the basis of the ancient poets he worked out a complex metrical theory which has never been superseded, and he made the first attempt to compile a dictionary, arranged not in any of the various alphabetic orders adopted in later Arabic lexicons, but according to a phonetic scheme in which Indian influences have been suspected. His pupil, the Persian Sībawayh (*d. c.* 793), rendered even greater services to Arabic philology. Working on the scattered researches of his predecessors, he combined the results into a systematic and logical exposition of Arabic grammar. His work (it is significant that it has never borne any title but **The Book*), though improved at points by later writers, settled the principles of Arabic grammar once and for all, and still remains the standard authority.

Somewhat before this, but when and how is uncertain, a rival school of philology was set up at Kūfa (Najaf). Its teaching was marked by less emphasis on traditional forms, and represented, therefore, the modernist wing of philological science. The great authority of Sībawayh's *Book* won at a later period general acceptance for the views of the school of Baṣra, but for a time the two schools were engaged in a bitter academic rivalry. The chief philological pursuits were the collection of materials for lexicography and the editing of the old monuments of Arabic speech, the poetry and proverbs of Arabia. The grammarians of this early period, however, were not dry schoolmen, confined to a narrow groove, but the humanists of Islam. Their work was inspired by practical

aims. They had to meet the growing demand for education created by the new bureaucratic organization of the Empire, and the most famous scholars of the time were regularly entrusted with the education of the young princes. An encyclopaedic tendency is already visible in the 200 works attributed to Abū 'Ubayda (*d. c.* 825), 'a skin stuffed with knowledge', as Abū Nuwās admiringly described him. His exhaustive knowledge of the history of the Arabs, both before and after the rise of Islam, was the chief source utilized by many later historians. In spite of this, Abū 'Ubayda, who was of Jewish origin, is perhaps best known as one of the leaders on the Persian side in the *Shu'ūbīya* movement, the literary nationalist movement already referred to, which runs through much of Eastern Arabic literature for the next two centuries and is reflected even in theological and legal works. The Shu'ūbīs, mostly Persians, attacked the pretensions of the Arabs and their language, derided their poetry, and claimed not only equality but even superiority for the Persians and other non-Arabs in almost every department of life. It is noteworthy, however, that the defenders of the Arabs counted in their ranks almost as many Persians as their opponents, so far had even Persia become Arabicized.

It was also in philological circles at Baṣra that the first translations into Arabic were made. Amongst these were a version of the Persian hero-saga and quasi-historical records, now lost except for quotations in later works, and a version of the famous Indian fables of Bidpay, which, under the title of **Kalīla and Dimna*, is in fact the earliest Arabic literary work that has come down to us. Their translator Ruzbih, known as Ibn al-Muqaffa', was a convert from Zoroastrianism and was put to death about 760 as a partisan of the Shi'ite pretenders. Although a translation, the style of the work was greatly admired, but so far as may be judged from the

uncertain state of the text it breaks with Arabic tradition by its loose texture and in other minor respects.

The main current of the second branch of study, that of the Tradition, did not itself come into full literary activity during this period, but is represented by a number of offshoots. The orthodox standpoint of the Abbasids made it imperative that the administration of the Empire should be brought (outwardly at least) into conformity with the principles of the Sacred Law as interpreted by the theologians, instead of following the somewhat arbitrary legal methods of the Umayyads. Before the death of Hārūn three schools of law had already come into existence. In the process of codification, the extensive literature of which may well be omitted in this sketch, two works stand out as possessing a wider importance. The dissatisfaction of the more orthodox theologians with the speculative and foreign elements admitted by the school of Iraq was expressed by the Madīna doctor Mālik b. Anas (*d.* 795). Placing the greatest weight on the traditions, not only of the Prophet but of the community at Madīna, whose common law might be regarded as the common law of the Prophet, Mālik compiled the traditions on which he himself, as a practising judge, based his decisions into a volume famous throughout the Muslim world under the title of *al-Muwaṭṭa'* (The Levelled Path). The second work is the masterly compilation known as **The Book on the Land-Tax* made for Hārūn by his chief qāḍī, Abū Yūsuf. Notwithstanding its title the work covers the whole range of practical administration from water-rights to the art of war, and is an indispensable commentary for every student of early Muslim history.

It was at this period also that the study of history was definitely established as an independent branch of the science of Tradition. The first Muslim historical work was a biography of the Prophet, compiled by Ibn Isḥāq (*d.* 766). His

plan met with such opposition from the theologians at Madīna that he was driven to take refuge first in Egypt and then in Iraq, where the Caliph himself provided him with the means to complete his work. No copy of the original has yet been found, but a *revised edition made by Ibn Hishām (*d.* 834) became the standard authority for the history of Muḥammad's life. A slightly different object was pursued by the historian al-Wāqidī (*d.* 823) in his *monograph on the Prophet's military expeditions (*Maghāzī*). Taking as his theme the expansion of the Islamic community, he neglected all traditions relating to the period prior to the Hijra, and in a separate work (now lost except for citations) carried his narrative down to the conquests made under the early Caliphs. The older semi-historical school, based on tribal traditions, continued to be represented, however, by several writers, whose works, in spite of their untrustworthiness in detail and chronology, survive as a discordant element in the later compilations. In contrast to them stand the numerous monographs on various points of Islamic history written by al-Madā'inī (*d. c.* 840), the extracts from which, quoted by later historians, reveal him as a writer with a gift for graphic description and an historian who took his science more seriously than his predecessors.

The most signal literary development of the early Abbasid period was the emergence of a 'new style' in poetry, distinguished by the employment of novel similes, which of course became more 'precious' and far-fetched as time went on. Its founder was the blind poet Bashshār b. Burd (*d.* 784), 'one of those gifted souls whose poetry is utterly effortless'. One of his famous similes runs:

> Meseemed that upon their heads the dust of battle lay
> and our swords a night of flaming stars that cleave the abyss.

The patronage of the court, powerfully seconded by popular favour, brought the new style into open recognition, in spite

of the unfavourable attitude of the philologists. These, from the lexicographical principle that pre-Islamic was superior to post-Islamic Arabic, carried their dogma over into the aesthetic sphere and proclaimed the unapproachable superiority of pre-Islamic poetry, a judgement which undoubtedly exercised a sinister influence on the work of at least the minor poets. In spite of the bitter sarcasms of Abū Nuwās some two centuries had yet to pass before the philologists were at last forced to concede the merits of the new poetry. The new tendencies were also strengthened by the entrance into the field of poetry of the Persians, who undoubtedly brought to it the note of delicacy and urbanity (though accompanied at times by cynicism and frivolity) that had hitherto been lacking in Arabic verse.

In the second generation the half-Persian *Abū Nuwās (*d.* 810) stands head and shoulders above the poets who thronged the court. For combined versatility, sentiment, elegance of diction, and command of language he has few rivals in Arabic, and has not inaptly been compared with Heine. He is at his happiest in his wine-songs, but his elegies, love-poems, and satires, though often containing much both in subject and sentiment that offends our taste, are little inferior. A more daring experiment was made by his contemporary, the Arab Abu'l-'Atāhiya (*d.* 826), whose smooth-running verse, with its earnest moral tone and reflective asceticism, however inferior to Abū Nuwās in brilliance and technique, earned for him a reputation as lasting as that of the dissolute favourite of the court. In order to gain the widest possible hearing Abu'l-'Atāhiya deliberately eschewed all the poetic conventions and mannerisms and used only the simple language of the people. So violent a break with tradition found no imitators, and the successors of Abu'l-'Atāhiya (who may justly be called the father of Arabic

religious poetry) are to be found on the one hand in the street preachers of Baṣra and on the other in the popular poetry, which diverged more and more widely from the literary productions as they grew more stilted and artificial.

A gap of nearly 150 years separates Abū Nuwās from the next poet of the first rank. Though it would be a pleasant task, if space permitted, to linger over some of the delicate portraits, witty epigrams and barbed satires of the many intervening poets of the second rank, only two may be mentioned here. The Syrian Abū Tammām (*d.* 845) represents the ancient tradition; he was a poet of fortune, wandering from town to town and reciting his *qaṣīdas* at the courts of the provincial governors. It was on one of these journeys that he was detained by a snowstorm in the home of a wealthy patron of literature and whiled away the time by compiling from his host's library of the poets the anthology that has immortalized his name, the inimitable *Dīwān al-Ḥamāsa* (p. 17). The new style is represented by the unfortunate prince Ibn al-Mu'tazz, whose caliphate of a day led to his assassination in 908. His fame as a poet rests on his revel-poems and on one of the few successful narrative poems in Arabic, a * miniature epic in iambic couplets celebrating the reign of his cousin, the Caliph Mu'taḍid. He was the author also of an important work on poetics in which the canons of the new style were definitely fixed.

§ 2. (*From* A.D. 813 *to* 847)

With the reign of al-Ma'mūn a new phase opens in the development of Arabic literature. Ma'mūn himself was the son of a Persian mother, spent much of his early life in Persia, and won the throne largely by the aid of Persian troops. During his reign Persian influences definitely gained

control at the court, and it was probably to these influences that he owed his leanings towards the eclectic school of thought represented by the academy of Jundī-Shābūr. He encouraged the translation and study of Greek works and took a prominent part in religious and philosophical discussions. In this attitude he was followed by his first and second successors, and thus for a quarter of a century Hellenistic influences found full liberty of expression throughout the Empire. These studies were pursued, however, less by Arabs than by converts, who brought with them into Islamic circles the almost unquestioned acceptance of the truth of philosophy and the semi-religious prestige which had attached to it in all the Eastern lands. As the prevailing system of philosophy was Neoplatonism, it instantly became a matter of acute importance to define the relation between its doctrines of philosophic pantheism and the rigid monotheism of the Koran.

The first faint stirrings of the spirit of inquiry were manifested among the Arabs even in the early decades of the Muslim era. It was possibly as a result of Christian controversy in Syria that the movement first crystallized round a definite point, the reality of human freedom (*Qadar*) against the orthodox doctrine of predestination. As foreign influences grew stronger the movement widened in scope, and became identified with the school called *al-Mu'tazila* (the 'seceders' or 'neutrals'), into which the Qadarite school was merged. The orthodox theologians sought to exorcise the demon. Like Tertullian and the Latin fathers they were suspicious from the first and before long anathematized all philosophy. It was not in their power, however, either to prevent or control its study. A cultivated society, reared on Aristotelian logic and full of admiration for the wonders of Greek science, inevitably accepted its premisses and was thereby stirred to an insatiable intellectual curiosity. But so long as these

studies were pursued in an academic way and were confined to a small circle, there was little danger to be feared.

The situation was radically changed when Ma'mūn publicly declared for the Mu'tazilite heresy and imposed an inquisition on the orthodox. Supported by the civil power, Mu'tazilism threw discretion to the winds and its leaders gave vent to theories each more revolutionary than the last.

'They were applying to the ideas of the Koran the keen solvent of Greek dialectic, and the results which they obtained were of the most fantastically original character. Thrown into the wide sea and utter freedom of Greek thought, they had lost touch of the ground of ordinary life, with its reasonable probabilities, and were swinging loose on a wild hunt after ultimate truth, wielding as their weapons definitions and syllogisms.'[1]

We are not concerned here with their names and their works; the orthodox saw to it that nothing of those survived, and their importance for Arabic literature lies in the influence they exerted and the opposition they stirred up. In proportion as Mu'tazilism became more daring in its assaults on orthodoxy, the defenders of the citadel became more tenacious in its defence. The inquisition but added bitterness to its defiance. Rejecting everything that savoured of the hated heresy, refusing even to admit discussion, they fell back on the Koran and the Tradition and met all questions with *Bilā kayf*—'Don't ask "How?"' Their champion, and the idol of the Baghdad mob, was Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (*d.* 855), the foremost traditionist of his age.

It is a relief to turn from these controversies to the small circle of those who, in a spirit as impersonal as that of their subject, were engaged in the task of making Greek science and philosophy accessible to the Arabic-speaking world. The work of translation had begun somewhat earlier, but it

[1] D. B. Macdonald, *Development of Muslim Theology*, p. 140.

was at the court of Ma'mūn, who established a library and observatory for the purpose, that it reached its height. The earliest translator on a large scale was Qustā b. Lūqā of Baalbek (*fl.* 835), who not only made renderings of Aristotle and many later writers but himself wrote copiously on mathematics, astronomy, and other subjects. His fame was eclipsed by Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq (*d.* 873), the translator of Plato and Galen, who studied Greek in Anatolia and under the orthodox reaction supplanted the Christian family of Bukhtyashū' (which had held the post for several generations) as physician to the Caliph. The zeal of translators at times outran the bounds of discretion. Some of the *Enneads* of Plotinus appeared under the title of **The Theology of Aristotle*; the genuineness of the ascription was never questioned, and the work remained as a further element of confusion in the welter of philosophies which the Muslim vainly strove to harmonize. The first student of the Greeks to make his name in Arabic philosophy was al-Kindī (*d. c.* 850), whose pure Arab descent earned him the title of 'The Philosopher of the Arabs'. His work, however, differed little from that of his Aramaean contemporaries, except that he took the whole field of Greek science for his portion. He is credited with no fewer than 265 treatises on such various subjects as music, astronomy, and medicine, as well as the harmonizing of the Platonic and Aristotelian systems. The chief name in the early history of Arabic mathematical science is *al-Khwārizmī. With the encouragement of Ma'mūn, he studied not only the Greek works on mathematics and astronomy but also the Indian systems which had been translated into Arabic some years before. By the use of the Indian numerals he revolutionized methods of reckoning, and it was from the Latin translations of his works on algebra and astronomy that Europe received the decimal notation ('Arabic numerals'), which were called

by his name ('Algorism') throughout the Middle Ages. Equally famous in medieval times were the astronomical works of his contemporary al-Farghānī ('Alfraganus') and of al-Kindī's pupil Abū Mash'ar ('Albumaser', *d.* 885).

While the science of history made little progress during this period, the necessities of administration were responsible for the earliest Arabic geographical work. As in the classical age, the postal service of the Muslim Empire was organized purely as a department of government. It seems that the Arabs took over the Roman and Persian systems much as they stood and even preserved the old technical nomenclature. The centralizing tendencies of the Abbasids led them to pay special attention to the upkeep of the means of communication, and it was the postmaster at the new capital Sāmarrā, Ibn Khurdādhbih, who in 844 compiled the first list of post-roads. Taking one province at a time, he gives lists of post-stations and the distances between each, and concludes with a summary of the revenues due from each district.

The most genial writer of the age if not of Arabic literature altogether, and the founder of Arabic prose style, was the grandson of a negro slave, 'Amr b. Baḥr, known as al-Jāḥiẓ ('the goggle-eyed'). He died, more than ninety years old, in 869. Endowed with a remarkable power of assimilation, he forced his way up from very humble beginnings, studied philology in the school of his native Baṣra and theology under the celebrated Mu'tazilite teacher an-Naẓẓām, and took a keen interest in Greek philosophy and science. A man of his mould could not forego his independence; he resigned an official post three days after his appointment, and even in theology he formed a school of his own. Although a Mu'tazilite, his views were so tempered by his breadth of mind that, we are told, 'he was held in high esteem among both Mu'tazilites and non-Mu'tazilites, by all the learned who knew men

and could judge affairs', and even the fanatical Mutawakkil appointed him tutor to his sons. He writes with a careless loquacity, alternately grave and gay, exalted and extravagant. His wit was ready and sometimes mordant, and his industry immense. Apart from his innumerable treatises, he was an indefatigable reader, and the story goes that he used to hire booksellers' shops so that he could sit up reading all night.

Of his works there have come down to us, apart from theological tracts and a large work on rhetoric, a few treatises and a collection of essays entitled *The Book of Animals*. The very titles of the former suggest his originality—'The Boast of the Blacks over the Whites', *'The Merits of the Turks', 'In Praise of Merchants and Disparagement of Officials', 'The Superiority of Speech to Silence', &c. *The Book of Animals*, his masterpiece, fills seven volumes, in which zoology plays a minor part. After a long introduction including, amongst other matters, a section in praise of books and on the origins of writing, the first and second volumes are devoted to dogs. The material is cast loosely into the form of a debate between the 'Fowl-keeper' and the 'Dog-owner', and the bad and good qualities of dogs are illustrated by quotations from traditions, poems, proverbs, anecdotes, even extracts from the Koran. Popular superstitions are brought in—how the dog is reputed to be the horse of the Jinn, its place in the science of augury, and how the madness caused by its bite may be cured by the blood of kings and nobles. The remaining volumes treat more briefly but as discursively of the other animals and insects known to the ancient Arabs. In later days his methods were copied by many plagiarists, and we possess a work by one such pseudo-Jāḥiz, **The Book of Beauties and Antitheses*, on various physical and moral qualities.

§ 3. (*From* A.D. 847 *to* 945)

The event which marks the end of the preceding period is the accession of the Caliph Mutawakkil (847–61). Within a century of its foundation the Abbasid house had exhausted its strength and was henceforth at the mercy of its imported or self-appointed defenders. Like all Muslim dynasties it was only in its young and vigorous days that it gave unrestricted patronage to all students of science and literature; as it decayed it felt more strongly the need of conciliating the powerful influence wielded by the theologians. Their support was gained only at a price; but though in later days they were able to stifle all opposition, the spirit of inquiry and the latent genius that was finding expression in the Islamic community were as yet too strong for them. Mutawakkil did what he could; he gave the support of the civil power to the orthodox; he silenced Muḥāsibī, the most prominent Ṣūfī teacher in Baghdad; he outlawed the Shī'a, and enforced drastic sumptuary and civil regulations against Christians and Jews. The mob seconded his efforts, and every poet or writer who showed the least sign of independence was liable to be lynched as a Mu'tazilite.

Mu'tazilism remained a menace, however, so long as the orthodox rejected every appeal to reason. The theologians could assure their victory only by turning the Mu'tazilite dialectic against its authors, and a scholastic theology in this sense came into existence simultaneously in Egypt, Baghdad, and Samarqand, which gradually argued Mu'tazilism out of existence. The credit for this was reaped by al-Ash'arī (*d.* 933), the leader of the movement in Baghdad, who had himself been educated in Mu'tazilite circles. The milder Mu'tazilites became the left wing of the scholastic theologians, and the more radical found a new sphere of activity in

Shi'ism. The Ash'arite school also had its trials, however; the Ḥanbalites still maintained their opposition to any discussion, and it took a century and a half before Ash'arism became the orthodox school in Islam.

Scarcely had the orthodox turned the tables on Mu'tazilism than they became aware of new dangers threatening them from a movement hitherto closely allied with them. From the earliest days of Islam many believers were noted for their ascetic practices. The discipline of these early devotees was to recite the Koran through over and over again, until the 'inner meaning' of each verse should become a living reality to them. The best type of first-century asceticism is al-Ḥasan of Baṣra (*d.* 728). To a life of singular devotion and courage he added a sound intellect and a fine gift of eloquence, displayed in the sermons which have been preserved to us. His memory, in spite of attacks by the literalist theologians of a later age, remains fragrant in Islam to this day. In the second century this simple asceticism became more vigorous and, while remaining wholly within the community, developed a number of distinctive practices. We hear of monastic retreats and of street 'preachers' at Baṣra and elsewhere. These ascetics (about this time the term *Ṣūfī* began to be applied to them) were found among the Qadarites and Shi'ites as well as among the orthodox. It was inevitable that the primitive Islamic mysticism should assimilate some elements from foreign systems, which, though not strictly Koranic, could yet be linked on to the Koran. The most conspicuous instance is the change-over from the ascetic motive of fear of God to the devotional and mystical motive of love of God, expressed most beautifully and simply by the poetess Rābi'a of Baṣra (*d.* 801). It is hard not to see in this the influence of Syriac mysticism.

So far the objects and methods of the Ṣūfīs involved

nothing repugnant to the general sense of Islam. But when, in the third century, the mystical love of God developed into ecstasy symbolized by sensuous images; when the esoteric sufistic interpretations of the Koran began to diverge more widely from its accepted outward sense, and the Ṣūfīs to claim freedom from the religious practices incumbent on all Muslims; when, to the horror of the uninitiate, Ṣūfīs were heard to speak of the Deity in the first person—the theologians realized that they must arm for another struggle. All this was as yet, perhaps, confined to a few advanced thinkers; it was not until the next century that the old-time meeting for recitation of the Koran (*dhikr*) became in certain circles a means to induce ecstasy by various methods of autohypnosis. The bulk of the Ṣūfīs were still at one with their fellow-Muslims in their beliefs and practices, and it was in Ṣūfī circles that the arguments of the Mu'tazilites were first countered by their own weapons. Nevertheless the tendency of Ṣūfism was to widen the breach between theologian and mystic, and when its views were erected into a unified, if complex, rival doctrine, the theologians felt that it was time to strike. The chief figure in the struggle was the Persian *al-Ḥallāj, who represents the culmination of the early mystic movement. His life, doctrines, and extant writings have been exhaustively studied in a series of monographs by Professor Massignon, who has amply vindicated the fundamental orthodoxy of al-Ḥallāj against the speculative pantheism with which he was formerly charged. But his popularity alarmed the weak government of Baghdad, and on the ground of some incautious phrases he was condemned by a theological council and cruelly executed in 921. After his death Ṣūfism continued to develop along two lines; one which sought to reconcile the mystic life with orthodox (Ash'arite) theology, the leading literary figure in which prior to Ghazālī

(p. 85) is al-Qushayrī (*d.* 1074), the author of a popular *treatise (*Risāla*); and another which diverged more and more into pantheism and antinomianism. Although the latter struck deeper roots in Persian than in Arabic soil, we shall meet with it later in Arabic literature.

It has been necessary to deal fully with these religious controversies for two reasons. The omission of all reference to theological literature would present a distorted picture of Arabic literature, of which the vast bulk is religious in scope. In the second place they supply the background for all the literature of the period, as nearly every writer of importance was concerned in one way or another with the disputes, and his attitude towards them is reflected in his works. It will not, however, be necessary for us to deal again with religious movements, except in connexion with those later writers who occupy a special position both in literature and theology.

The most important literary movement connected with the orthodox reaction was the definitive collection of the Tradition. Though Mālik b. Anas (p. 40) and the orthodox theologians had established the principle that the law must be based on the traditions, the great body of traditionists studied them less from the legal than from the theological standpoint, and no traditionist was qualified for judicial office unless he had also studied jurisprudence. To remedy this a new method of presenting the Tradition was devised. The older compilations, of which the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal (p. 45) is the most important, grouped traditions without regard to their subject-matter under the name of that contemporary of Muḥammad who was cited as the original authority. In the new system the traditions were arranged in order of subject-matter, with the aim of showing that the study of Tradition provided in itself a practical legal training.

The first of the new collections, compiled by *al-Bukhārī (*d.* 870), although it includes traditions of all sorts, biographical, ethical, and medical, as well as purely legal, was intended to serve as a handbook of jurisprudence. Each section is headed by a statement explaining the legal application of the traditions it contains; in some cases even we find chapter-headings without appended traditions, thus betraying the subjective methods followed by its author. The contemporary collection made by Muslim (*d.* 875), on the other hand, leaves the application of each tradition to the reader and aims more at presenting a complete collection of all the 'sound' traditions.

It was more than time that such an attempt was made. The story of the development of the Tradition in Islam is a most curious one. As the problems of the early community became more complex it was usual in theological circles to imagine what the practice (*sunna*) of the Prophet would have been under each new set of circumstances, and pass their judgement into circulation as a tradition (*ḥadīth*) emanating from the Prophet himself. These judgements, swayed by the conflicting views of sects and parties, were naturally often in open contradiction. The students of Tradition, faced with the necessity of discriminating between them, fastened first on the authenticity of the chain of authorities (*isnād*) by which the tradition was supported. Every genuine tradition, it was held, must be guaranteed by some reliable person as having been received by him from some other reliable person who himself had heard it from an earlier traditionist, and so on back to a contemporary of the Prophet who vouched for having heard the Prophet saying the words or seen him doing the action related therein. An *isnād* could as easily be forged as a tradition, however, and so, for two centuries, every movement in Islam endeavoured to gain support for

its aims by putting into the mouth of the Prophet utterances in favour of its particular views. When the Shi'ites, for example, claimed the right of the house of 'Alī to the Caliphate, the orthodox countered with the tradition 'We Prophets have no heirs'. When the ascetics put into Muḥammad's mouth injunctions to forsake the world, the busy lawyers and men of affairs replied by traditions enjoining due attention to worldly matters. The conflict spread even into history where, to justify the luxury of the court, a school of historians, of whom Wāqidī (p. 41) is the chief, anxious to obliterate the memory of Muḥammad's simple life, succeeded in fogging all later writers by picturing him and his companions as enjoying to the full all the pleasures which were at their command.

Under such circumstances it became imperative to establish a corpus of traditions which could be accepted as genuine. The traditionists, still holding (at least outwardly) to the *isnād* criterion, eventually came to a general agreement that only certain chains of transmission could be regarded as authoritative. It was on these principles that both Bukhārī and Muslim selected their traditions out of a mass of several hundred thousand, and gave the name *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Sound) to their collections. Their judgement was accepted, and the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* hold in all subsequent history of Islam a place second only to the Koran, not so much that they decided once and for all which traditions were genuine and which false, but because they brought together all that was already recognized as genuine in orthodox circles. These two works were subsequently supplemented by four others of the same period, with which they form the six 'canonical' works of Islamic tradition. Even the Shi'ites accept the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* for the most part, but possess in addition their own standard collections. The collection of traditions continued for several

centuries, but few of the later compilations are of special importance in the history of Arabic literature.

Throughout this period the rivalry of the philological schools of Baṣra and Kūfa continued unabated, but both were beginning to decline before the new school of Baghdad. The work of its founder, Ibn Qutayba of Merv (*d.* 885), sufficiently indicates its aims. His chief composition is a literary thesaurus, *The Fountains of Story*, in ten books. So many later works conform to its general plan that it may stand for us as the original type of the essay in Arabic literature. Each book deals with a given subject, sovereignty, war, friendship, asceticism, and the like, and under each heading and sub-heading are inserted quotations from the Tradition, the poets, and from literary and historical sources. The author allows himself certain liberties with his matter, abridging and freely revising to gain enhanced effect. In capable hands the result is both pleasing and interesting, though it must be confessed that the taste is an acquired one. Of smaller compass are his *Book of Subjects of Knowledge*, a summary of the early traditions of the Arabs and Persians together with very brief biographies of the chief figures in Islamic history, and *The Book of Poetry and Poets.* In the introduction to this work, which contains short biographies of all the pre- and post-Islamic poets with illustrative examples of their poetry, he raises a voice, for the first time in Arabic philology, against the dogma of the matchlessness of the pre-Islamic poets:

'I have not preferred the ancient poet for his antiquity nor scorned the modern poet for his recency, but have scanned both with an equitable eye and given each one his due. . . . God hath not limited learning and poetry and eloquence to one age rather than another, nor distinguished one people thereby above another, but hath made it a joint heritage among His servants in every age, and hath made every ancient thing new in its time and every honour parvenu at its beginning.'

Of his many other works we need mention only a manual of style for the use of secretaries and a work on the contradictions in the Tradition. None of them, it will be seen, is scholastic in aim; they were intended to supply the officials and reading classes with the elements of all the subjects that were included under the heading of *Adab*, 'Polite Learning', and roughly correspond to Belles-Lettres.

Special interest attaches to the contemporary developments in the scientific study of history. The raw material lay to hand in the early monographs and it remained only to work them up into finished treatises. The first important work, a **History of the Conquests* by al-Balādhurī (*d.* 892), is selective in method; it supplies a consecutive narrative of the conquest of each province and generally omits variant traditions. Whether this was a natural step in the development of historical writing or due to outside influences is a moot point. About the same time al-Ya'qūbī (*d.* after 891) wrote on similar lines a chronological summary of universal history from the Shi'ite point of view, as well as a work on historical geography, the earliest of its kind in Arabic literature.

Valuable as both these works are, they are far outstripped by the vast history of aṭ-Ṭabarī (*d.* 923). It is characteristic of Muslim learning in the last few centuries that, while the great Oriental libraries of the Middle Ages often contained as many as twenty copies of this work, it was left to a band of European scholars towards the end of last century to restore it to Arabic literature by piecing together a number of scattered manuscripts. Ṭabarī represents the humane learning of his age at its best. Born at Āmul in Ṭabaristān in 839, he studied at Rayy, just missed Ibn Ḥanbal at Baghdad, and subsequently heard various teachers at Baṣra, Kūfa, the towns of Syria, and Fusṭāṭ (Old Cairo), before settling in Baghdad. After forty years' study he had acquired all the

theological, philological, and historical learning of early Islam in a completeness probably unequalled before or since. For forty years more he gave himself up to teaching and writing. He was essentially a traditionist, but independent withal; he founded a separate school of law (which barely survived him), and he set himself two great literary tasks.

'The highest object of scientific study remained for him, of course, the Revelation, which, however, he regarded in a double aspect: as the written Word of God in the Koran, and as the manifestation of the Will of God in History. So came into existence one after the other his Koran Commentary and his Universal History, the latter based likewise upon theological principles. In the following period both of these works formed the foundations of the Koranic and historical sciences. The history, which is unquestionably the weaker of the two and shows many defects in the composition (which are excused by the advanced age of the author), attained an authoritative position more speedily and fully than the former, because it had scarcely any competitors and its matter was not, like Koranic exegesis, the battlefield of contending parties. Yet by the unanimous judgement of all impartial men, there existed no earlier or later work which even approached Ṭabarī's commentary in universality of material, positive knowledge, and independence of judgement, and in the eastern Muslim world orthodox scientific Koran study gradually submitted to his authority.'[1]

His history, unlike the selective method of Balādhurī, gives a chronicle of events year by year, not in one continuous narrative but as related by his different authorities. His aim was to unite in one book all the historical traditions of the Arabs, both from the early tribal sources as well as the more critical work of Madā'inī, just as he had previously collected all the traditions relative to the Koran, but here for some reason he rarely criticizes or indicates any preference. The book thus presents an appearance of incoherence, and is deficient in some

[1] O. Loth in *Zeitsch. für Deutsche Morgenländ. Gesell.* xxxv. 589 ff.

respects (the conquest of Spain, for instance, is dismissed in six lines), but it is noteworthy that only since the publication of Ṭabarī's history has it been possible to obtain a clear and trustworthy picture of the early history of Islam. For the *pre-Islamic period he follows the usual 'authorities' for Arabic and Persian history.

In vivid contrast is the method followed by Ṭabarī's successor al-Mas'ūdī (*d.* 956). He in his early life studied not theology but science and philosophy, and spent many years in travelling through the East both by land and sea. The insight and experience gained by contact with other peoples, together with his early studies, supplied the material for his elaborate encyclopaedia of the history, geography, philosophy, and religions of the Muslims, their neighbours, and predecessors. Unfortunately only one volume, and that the least valuable, of the thirty that made up his original work has come down to us, and only one of his first abridgement. A second abridgement entitled **The Golden Meadows*, in some six hundred pages, is all that we have to judge our loss by. There is no more delightful work in Arabic. The inconsequent style of the author as he ranges over natural history, history, geography, ethnology, religion, medicine, and what not, his breadth of view and innumerable anecdotes, keep the reader interested and amused; and though he almost always refers the curious to his larger works for detailed accounts, the summary preserves a good deal of valuable historical matter. Some years before his death he wrote, at Old Cairo, a brief analytic index, with addenda, to his former works under the title of **The Book of Indication and Revision.* From this time forward history was firmly established as one of the principal branches of Muslim studies, and has maintained its place down to our own day as one of the most characteristic features of Islamic literature in all its languages.

About the same time an extensive and varied geographical literature came into existence. Like other scientific studies it was stimulated by the works of the Greeks, in this case the translation of Ptolemy made for al-Kindī. In no department of literature is the intellectual curiosity of the time, in both its finer and cruder aspects, more richly displayed; road-books on the lines of Ibn Khurdādhbih (p. 47), scientific works on mathematical geography, books of maps and sailors' charts, descriptions of 'marvels' and curiosities, travellers' guide-books, all find a place. Valuable and interesting as they all are, we are most attracted by the work of the descriptive geographers. Ya'qūbī has already been mentioned; in the tenth century he was followed by a series of indefatigable travellers, who between them traversed the Muslim world from end to end and have left us detailed accounts of the different provinces from personal observation. The two greatest were Ibn Ḥawqal, who in 977 expanded an earlier work written by *al-Iṣṭakhrī in 951, and *al-Maqdisī, whose book was first published in 985 and revised in 988. Both were animated by a passion for accuracy; Maqdisī, however, not only excels Ibn Ḥawqal in literary craftsmanship, but even to some extent anticipated our modern organic geography by extending his survey to the different manners, customs, beliefs, and good and bad qualities of the peoples whose lands he visited.

We possess also a number of very interesting accounts of embassies to foreign lands, such as that sent into Russia under *Ibn Faḍlān in 921, and that of the Spanish Jew *Ibn Ya'qūb to the court of Otto the Great. Travel-literature found a popular audience. The Arab has always been a wanderer and his natural propensity, strengthened by the duty of Pilgrimage to Mecca, moves him to curiosity about foreign lands and peoples. The first of the early travellers' tales of India, Africa, and China which we possess is **The Chain of Histories*, com-

piled at the port of Sīrāf in 851 (apparently verbatim from various sources) with a supplement dating from about 910. Its ancient popularity in the East is reflected in the later West, where it was one of the earliest non-scientific books to be translated into a European language. The marvellous element is more prominent in its successor, **The Wonders of India*, written about 950 by a Persian ship-captain from Rāmhurmuz. Somewhat akin to this is a short compendium of geography and legendary history with special reference to Egypt, drawn largely from Mas'ūdī, known as **The Summary of Marvels.*

To this period finally belongs the greatest of the medieval doctors, ar-Rāzī, known to Europe as Rhazes (*d. c.* 930). Most of his life was spent in Persia, but he held for a time the post of physician-in-chief at the great hospital of Baghdad. A number of his treatises have come down to us, both in Arabic and in medieval Latin translations, including his great posthumous work called *al-Ḥāwī* ('Continens'), several compendiums, and numerous monographs including a celebrated one on small-pox. The most interesting feature of his work is his clinical reports of cases, which formed a mine of material for later collectors of anecdotes.[1]

§ 4. (*From* A.D. 945 *to* 1055)

The century of Turkish misrule in Baghdad was ended at last by the Persian house of Buwayh, who in 945 substituted themselves, although they were Shi'ites, for the Turks as guardians of the Caliph. As Shi'ites the Buwayhids had little sympathy with the orthodox, and in their territories, centring round the three princely houses of Iraq, Rayy, and Fārs, the tendencies persecuted by the orthodox regained their liberty. The political weakness of Baghdad, however, and the growth of powerful new states whose territories were carved

[1] An example will be found in Prof. E. G. Browne's *Arabian Medicine* (pp. 51–3), from which the above details have been taken.

out of the former Empire of the Abbasids is reflected in the decentralization of Arabic literature.

(*a*) *The Circle of Sayf ad-Dawla.* For a few years the main current of Arabic literature lies in Northern Syria, at Aleppo, the seat of a tiny Arab dynasty, the Shi'ite Hamdānids. Round Sayf ad-Dawla (*reg.* 944–67) gathered a company rarely matched for many-sided brilliance. His generosity attracted nearly all the leading men of letters of the day and won for his name an enduring reputation.

In genuinely Arab lands a literary revival is always accompanied by an outburst of poetry, and Aleppo was no exception. Sayf ad-Dawla's poet-laureate, *al-Mutanabbī (*d.* 965), who owes his name ('The Would-be Prophet') to an escapade in his early life, is claimed by some native critics to be the greatest of Arabic poets, or at least the last great Arabic poet. The usual European view of his poetry has been succinctly put by Professor Brockelmann:

'Mutanabbī in fact brought the seeds, present in the old Qaṣīda form and developed further by the greatest of the Umayyad poets, to their full ripeness, or rather to over-ripeness. He carried that form of art to its extreme consequences and even fell often into insipidity. By the artistry of the poets of Baghdad, fructified by Persian genius, he remained practically untouched. While these were in many ways clearly aware of their non-Arab character, he was proudly conscious of his position as a pure Arab and as such felt the predominance of the barbarians as a disgrace. This objective recognition, which cannot be denied to his art, is certainly not calculated to strengthen its appeal to our subjective feeling. Though in the old poetry we may, in spite of its unfamiliar tenor, admire the severe chastity of the verses, in Mutanabbī everything is, as by hypertrophy, perverted into immoderation. The images and metaphors no longer spring unsought out of the natural surroundings of the poet, but are far-fetched and for the most part bizarre.'

Nevertheless, it is in large measure these very qualities which Arabic critics have most admired in him, and which

gained for his poetry a popularity which it has never lost. He has quite overshadowed in popular estimation his contemporary *Abū Firās (*d.* 967), a nephew of Sayf ad-Dawla, whose poems are, as the same critic puts it, 'a poetic diary of his adventures' and, less artistic in expression than Mutanabbī, seldom compensate by genuine emotion.

In the next generation a momentous step was taken in the development of Arabic prose. It seems that in early times a certain religious veneration had attached to *saj'* (rhymed prose) as the medium employed in the Koran, which had militated against its general adoption for profane purposes. For two centuries at least the official predication (*Khuṭba*) on Fridays in the cathedral mosques had been cast in this form, probably because it was so used by the street preachers of Baṣra in the second century. Sayf ad-Dawla's court preacher, Ibn Nubāta (*d.* 984), wrote his entire sermons in *saj'*; these, collected by his son, have always been highly esteemed for their style and contents. It had also, even in Umayyad times, become a common style in official correspondence, and many early documents of this sort gained a wide circulation as models of eloquence. So natural an ornament of Arabic style could not be permanently excluded from general literature, and, once the essay had become a recognized genre, it was inevitable (especially in a society of philologists) that *saj'* should be brought in to impart brilliance, wit, and polish. Its definite establishment for this purpose dates from the collection of *Epistles* (*Rasa'il*) written to various personages by Abū Bakr al-Khwārizmī (*d.* 1002), whose literary career began at Aleppo. The style spread like wildfire throughout the Eastern provinces, growing so rapidly in complexity that even before his death al-Khwārizmī found himself outmoded.[1]

[1] It had long been customary to write prefaces in *saj'*, and a more extensive use of it was made by a few writers, such as Jāḥiẓ and Maqdisī, but the latter

In the background of this brilliant society, and scarcely heeded by them, lived one of the greatest of Muslim thinkers, *al-Fārābī (*d.* 950), of Central-Asian Turkish descent. His works on medicine and music became standard treatises, but it is for his services to Arabic philosophy that his name still lives. His chief endeavour was to reconcile the systems of Aristotle and Plato (as interpreted chiefly by the Neoplatonists), but with all this he remained a firm believer in the truth of Islam, and strove to bring the whole of Greek philosophy into conformity with its doctrines. His most interesting work for us is a *Muslim version of the *Republic*, conceived as both Church and State in one.

The North Syrian school came to an end soon after the death of Sayf ad-Dawla, but one belated figure connected with it remains to be mentioned. Abu'l-'Alā al-Ma'arrī (973–1057) is a solitary and unexpected apparition in Arabic literature. Though blind from early youth, he studied in Aleppo and for a short time tried his fortune in Baghdad, but retired in the end to his native town. His early poems, collected under the title of *Saqṭ az-Zand*, differ little from the ordinary artificial poetry of the age, but in his later poems, for all the complicated artifice in rhyme and word-harmony implied in their name of **al-Luzūmīyāt*, he stands out not only as a great poet but as a great humanist and an incisive, though pessimistic, thinker.

'Taking reason for his guide (says Prof. Nicholson) he judges men and things with a freedom which must have seemed scandalous to the rulers and privileged classes of the day. Amid his meditations on the human tragedy a fierce hatred of injustice, hypocrisy, and superstition blazes out. Vice and folly are laid bare in order that

writing in 985 declares that in his time 'men of letters prefer prose to rhythm but the vulgar love rhymes and *saj'*'. Illustrative examples of the development of *saj'* in the tenth century are given by Mez, *Die Renaissance des Islams*, 231 ff., 308 ff.

virtue and wisdom may be sought. In his poetry we see the age depicted without fear or favour, and—what is more appealing—the artist himself, struggling with doubts, yet confident in the power of mind to solve difficulties and give light, if any can be looked for. But much of the *Luzūm* is monotonous; a great deal is trivial and pedantic and to our taste intolerably clever: it moves us to admiration and contempt, it thrills, fatigues, fascinates, and repels; and when all has been said, it remains unique and immortal because it expresses the personality of an extraordinary man.'

> They all err—Moslem, Christian, Jew, and Magian;
> Two make Humanity's universal sect:
> One man intelligent without religion,
> And one religious without intellect.[1]

His Muslim contemporaries, though they flocked to his lectures, did not know quite what to make of him, and their successors, finding in the *Luzūmīyāt* much that displeased them, as Muslims, in Abu'l-'Alā's philosophic scepticism and detached attitude to all formal religion, and as aesthetes, in his disregard of the traditional canons of Arabic poetry, have generally ranked the *Saqṭ az-Zand* higher. Modern European critics have sometimes gone to the opposite extreme, and credited him with advanced philosophical views which he himself would probably have repudiated with horror. Abu'l-'Alā was less successful in his prose writings, the most important for us being his **Epistles* (*Rasā'il*), of which part of a collection made by the author himself is still extant. They are written in elaborate rhymed prose style and abound in allusions and the literary elegances which make all such compositions appear artificial and pedantic to us.

(*b*) *Iraq under the Buwayhids.* While the true Arab elements in Muslim literature still governed the circle of Sayf ad-Dawla, in Baghdad and the East they were gradually being ousted by

[1] R. A. Nicholson, *Eastern Poetry and Prose*, p. 110.

the growing Persian taste. The period is marked by two interesting features. In lieu of the nonentities who held the Caliphate and the rough Buwayhid rulers, the patronage of literature fell to a series of remarkable and immensely wealthy Persian wazīrs, who munificently endowed all branches of learning. Most famous of them all is the 'Ṣāḥib', Ibn 'Abbād (938–95), with whom all the poets, writers, and scientists of the age were in touch. But as they themselves were only second-rate men of letters, was it entirely an accident that they found little but the second-rate to patronize? The wazīr Ibn al-'Amīd (*d.* 971) had had indeed as his librarian an historian of the first rank and author of an interesting work on ethics, Miskawayh (*d.* 1030), whose long-lost **Experiences of the Nations*, the first important general history since Ṭabarī, shows a fine acuteness and independence of judgement. Amid the chorus of eulogies a different note is sounded by the all-but-forgotten Abū Ḥayyān at-Tawḥīdī (*d.* after 1009), who ranks with Jāḥiẓ as a master of Arabic prose, 'the imām of the eloquent (says Yāqūt), unique and unrivalled in sagacity, intelligence, mastery of style and vigour'. In his *Book of the Two Wazīrs* he portrayed the weaknesses of Ibn al-'Amīd and the Ṣāḥib with such bitterness that the book was reputed to bring misfortune upon all who possessed it.

The fashion of the time, however, was all for jingling rhymes and entertainment. It was now that the first drafts of the *Arabian Nights* were made with tales translated from Indian and Persian, and it was with the same object that men of letters ransacked literature for anecdotes to be substituted for the philological and scholastic contents of the essay. The new type of essay of course has always been immensely popular, from the earliest productions of the qāḍī at-Tanūkhī (940–94), called *Deliverance after Distress* and **The Collection of Histories*, through an innumerable progeny (of which **The*

Literary Delectus (*al-Mustaṭraf*) of al-Abshīhī (1388–1446) may be cited here as one of the best both in contents and style) down to our own day.

The second feature is the foundation of libraries and academies in all the great cities of the Muslim world. Princes and wazīrs vied with one another in procuring first editions and copies of valuable works, and in establishing colleges (*madrasa*), which were not only open to all comers but in many cases endowed with funds for the maintenance of students and professors, among whom not a few women were numbered. The details of these institutions make astounding reading. A minor college founded at Baghdad in 990 contained 10,400 books; the great library of al-'Azīz at Cairo contained at the lowest estimate 120,000 volumes, while that of al-Ḥakam at Cordova was even larger. It may possibly be the catalogue of some such library that has come down to us by the name of *al-Fihrist* ('The Index'), composed by an-Nadīm at Baghdad in 988. This most valuable work opens with a section on various languages and scripts and the sacred books recognized by Muslims, followed by seven 'discourses' on the different branches of Arabic literature, philology, history, poetry, theology, law, philosophy, fables and magic, and adds two final discourses on sects and foreign religions, and alchemy. In each section the author enumerates all known books on these subjects with brief biographical notices of their authors and much other valuable material for the cultural history of the Near East. The *Fihrist* reveals to us how enormous was the output of Arabic literature in the first three centuries of Islam, and how very little has come down to us. Of many authors we possess only small fragments, and the great majority would otherwise have been entirely unknown to us even by name.

The remaining literature of the Buwayhid period is mainly theological. The term would hardly cover the famous

treatise on the **Principles of Government* by al-Māwardī (*d.* 1058), were it not that it describes in fact the ideal government of the theocratic state with but slight concessions to what the theologians regarded as the corrupt and illegal practice of the day. The Shi'ites of course made the most of their opportunity of open activity, and the bibliography of Shi'ite books composed by the jurist Muḥammad aṭ-Ṭūsī (*d.* 1067) is of interest as showing the volume of Shi'ite literature then existing that has since perished, the greater part no doubt deliberately suppressed by the orthodox Sunnīs. Somewhat before this, however, the Zaydī sect of the Shi'a had founded an independent state in the Yaman, which has maintained its existence to this day. In this secluded corner they produced a considerable literature whose monuments are only now being examined in Europe and found to possess, in spite of their predominant theological bias, no little interest and value. Of the general literary work of the Shi'ites special interest attaches to the pseudographs attributed to the Prophet's son-in-law, 'Alī, but written by two brothers, the Sharīfs (i.e. descendants of 'Alī) al-Murtaḍā (966–1044) and ar-Raḍī (970–1015), the latter of whom was one of the most noted poets of the day. These forgeries consist of a poetic dīwān, and a work containing, under the title of *The Highway of Eloquence*, the supposed sermons and letters of 'Alī. The latter work in particular, written in pleasing and not too ornate *saj'*, has enjoyed a great reputation not only among the Shi'ites (who revere it as an authentic monument of their Imām) but also among Sunnī Muslims. Another famous didactic poem attributed to 'Alī, known as the **Zaynab Ode*, is an earlier forgery by one of the minor poets of the early Abbasid period.

While these writers belong to the major Shi'ite sect of the 'Twelvers' or 'Imamites', the Shi'ite name had also been

used to cover another movement, strongly if not mainly philosophical in scope, out of which arose, in the political sphere, the Fāṭimid dynasty (p. 74) and its still extremer offshoot, the secret society in Syria and Persia known as the 'Assassins'. The literature of the Fāṭimid movement was probably jealously guarded and disappeared with its representatives, but it has been conjectured that the work known as the **Epistles of the Pure Brethren* was a text-book used in the lower grades of initiation. These fifty-one treatises, compiled by a group of writers in Baṣra some time before the year 1,000, form an encyclopaedia of science and philosophy, summarizing the ideas of cultured Muslim society in the tenth century. By this time the orthodox church had come to a compromise with philosophy, much on the lines of the similar compromise in Medieval Europe, on condition that its doctrines should not be pushed to their logical conclusions. The epistles of the 'Pure Brethren' (*Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafā*), by their observance of these limits, were assured of general acceptance and have found an audience in all Muslim countries, both in the original text and in extracts and translations. The treatises begin with mathematics (nos. 1–6), introduction to philosophy and logic (7–13), and pass on to the general sciences (14–21) and anthropology (22–30). So far the teachings are based almost entirely on Aristotle. The next section, on the 'World-soul' (31–40), is clearly Neoplatonic, and the final treatises deal with the 'Theological Sciences' in, as might be expected, a strongly Mu'tazilite vein.

(*c*) *Eastern Persia.* Although the Persian dynasties in the East favoured the re-establishment of Persian as a literary language, Arabic was still largely used in court circles and official correspondence, and Arabic poets and writers found a ready patronage extended to them. The most brilliant of the Eastern courts was that of the Sāmānids at Bukhārā, but

the wealthy trading centre of Khwārizm (now Khīva) was particularly celebrated for its devotion to learning. Even at that time the Oxus provinces were famed, as they still are, for their zeal in religious studies, and of the compilers of the canonical books of Tradition the majority, including both Bukhārī and Muslim, belonged to Khurāsān.

With Nīshāpūr, the capital of Khurāsān proper, are connected the two most brilliant belle-lettrists of this period, al-Hamadhānī (969–1008) and ath-Tha'ālibī (961–1038). The former, more generally known as Badī' az-Zamān ('The Wonder of the Age'), passed his life travelling from one court to another, from the day when he left Hamadhān at the age of twelve, having already learned all that his teachers had to teach him, till his death at Herāt. An extract from Tha'ālibī's account of him is interesting not only in itself, but as a picture of the recreations of lettered society in his day, and it will help us also to understand the success of his **Maqāmāt*.

'He was a master of marvels and ingenuities. He would recite a poem of more than fifty lines which he had never heard but once, remember it all and repeat it from beginning to end without altering a letter. He would skim over four or five pages of a book he did not know and had never seen, then repeat it from memory perfectly co-ordinated. He would be asked to compose a poem or write a discourse on some original or out-of-the-way point, and would acquit himself of the task on the spot. He used often to write a book on the subject set him, beginning at the end and finishing at the beginning, and yet produce a work as beautiful and witty as any. He would adorn a choice *qaṣīda* with a noble treatise both of his own composition, read out of poetry prose, and fashion out of prose poetry. He would be given many rhymes, and would fit elegant verses to them, or be set to compose in prose or verse on all sorts of abstruse and difficult subjects, and recite extemporaneously, quicker than a flash. He could translate Persian verses full of conceits into Arabic verses with both speed and brilliance, and do many other marvellous things past numbering.'

Hamadhānī's position in Arabic literature is assured less by his ingenious *Epistles* than as the creator of its most perfect form of literary presentation, the *Maqāma* or 'Assembly'. The hand of its originator determined once and for all its setting.

'He imagined (says Chenery) a witty, unscrupulous improviser wandering from place to place and living on the presents which the display of his gifts produced from the generous and tasteful, and a kind of Rāwī or narrator, who should be continually meeting with the other, should relate his adventures and repeat his excellent compositions. . . . The Assembly is a kind of dramatic anecdote in the telling of which the author's object is to display his poetry, his eloquence, or his learning, and with this view the subject is continually subordinated to the treatment of it, the substance to the form.'

What Hamadhānī did, in fact, in his *Maqāmāt* was to invest with the literary graces of *saj'* and the glamour of impromptu composition the old-time tale in alternate prose and verse (the type of which is represented in European literature by *Aucassin and Nicolette*), and, by a stroke of genius, to adopt as the mouthpiece of his art that familiar figure in popular story, the witty vagabond. His hero, Abu'l-Fatḥ of Alexandria, is represented as possessing all the arts of rhetoric and readiness of language with which, as we have seen, Hamadhānī himself was endowed. Learned and unlearned alike were united in admiration of his work, and as its fame spread throughout the Muslim world, it found many imitators, more or less successful, but the *maqāma* never regained the spontaneity and mobility which, for all its elaboration of technique, it possessed in the hands of its talented creator. As has been pointed out by a recent critic, the *maqāma* represents in Semitic literature the culminating stage in the presentment of the literary theme.

'There is at bottom the same series of stages of increasing 'mobilization' of the literary theme among Aryans and Semites: epic

(= *qaṣida*), drama (= *qiṣṣa*, the alternate prose and verse tale), novel (= *maqāma*). At the first stage the memory alone of the auditor is brought into play; at the second the actor or reciter challenges the intelligence of the hearer; at the third it is to the will itself of the reader that appeal is made. Only, with the Aryan the form is capricious and the substance fixed; while with the Semite the form is rigid and the substance capricious and unreal.'[1]

For all his admiration of the genius of Hamadhānī, Tha'ālibī followed the more beaten track of philology and *adab*. His importance for us rests mainly on two books. One is a *general history, of which only the portion dealing with the early kings of Persia has come down to us, but is of interest in that it presents the last independent prose version of the material which was simultaneously being worked up by the great Persian poet Firdawsī to its final expression in the famous Persian epic, the *Shāhnāma*. The other is a biographical anthology of all the more recent poets in Arabic, drawn from the whole area of Arabic literature, called **The Solitaire of the Age*. The collection, thanks to the fine critical taste of its author, gained an immediate success, and was supplemented by a series of continuators during the next two centuries.

When in 999 the Sāmānids were ousted by the Central Asian Turks, their mantle fell on the new Turkish dynasty established at Ghazna in Afghanistan. The most famous of the Ghaznevid princes, Maḥmūd Yamīn ad-Dawla (*r.* 998–1030), though an illiterate barbarian at heart, ostentatiously sought renown in the political field by carrying fire and sword into India under a thin disguise of religious zeal, and in literature by bringing the chief writers of the day to add glitter and pomp to his court. His reign was celebrated in the *Book of Yamīn ad-Dawla*, written by one of the court officials,

[1] L. Massignon, *Lexique de la Mystique musulmane*, p. 298.

al-'Utbī (*d.* 1036). This work was a portent in historical literature. Henceforward independent historical composition was largely confined to monographs on individual sovereigns or on a particular dynasty, written for the most part by servants of the dynasty and frankly designed to extol their achievements. The arts of rhetoric were called in to give heightened effect, and simple historical narrative was overlaid by the 'precious' style popularized by Hamadhānī and his imitators. Appropriate as such methods of composition were in their proper sphere, their effect on historical writing was deplorable. Everything is sacrificed for a pretty turn of phrase, and trope is piled on trope until simple fact is shrouded in a mist of obscurity and adulation.

Maḥmūd did not rely on his reputation for generosity to attract scholars and men of letters. His method was cheaper and more effective ; he kidnapped them or exacted them as tribute from the states he conquered. It was thus that, on the conquest of Khwārizm, he became the patron of al-Bērūnī (*d.* 1048), who, more than any other writer, represents for us the genius of Islamic science. In his eyes knowledge was an end in itself.

'When he compiled his *Canon* (says an authority quoted by Yāqut) the Sultan (Mas'ud) rewarded him with an elephant load of silver, but he broke with custom and returned it to the treasury, pleading his ability to do without it. His hand was scarcely ever separated from a pen, or his eye from observation, or his mind from thought except on the two festival days of the year, Nayrūz and Mihrjān. On all other days his constant preoccupation was to remove the veil of dubiety from the face of knowledge and roll up the sleeves of constraint from its forearms. A certain learned man said: I visited Abu'r-Rayḥān (al-Bērūnī) as he was on the point of giving up his soul and his breath was at the death-rattle, and he, in that condition, said to me, "How was it that you once explained to me a certain problem of inheritance?" I said to him sympathetically,

"In this condition?" and he replied, "Is it not better that I should bid farewell to the world knowing this question than that I should leave it without this knowledge?" So I repeated it to him and he memorized it and taught me what he had promised; then I went out and even as I was in the street I heard the cry announcing his death.'

Of his historical works, unfortunately, nothing has been preserved, but his fame is securely founded on two masterpieces of compilation. **The Surviving Monuments of Past Generations* is a study in comparative chronology embracing not only a description of the eras and festivals of various nations and religions, but a good deal of historical information and curious observations on many subjects. For the second work he took advantage of Maḥmūd's conquests in India to learn Sanskrit and study Indian literature, and produced as the fruit of some thirteen years of labour a work on India which in subject and scientific method stands alone in Arabic literature. In his Chronology he had shown himself an exact scholar, in the **India* he went further and proved himself able to rise above national and religious prejudices (except perhaps his inborn grudge against the Arabs), and to hold an even balance between uncritical admiration and unthinking aversion. He translated many Indian books (including the Yoga Sutra and Patanjali) into Arabic, and, more curiously, several Arabic translations from the Greek into Sanskrit. A third, considered by some as his greatest work, is only now being edited in India. Under the name of *The Canon dedicated to Mas'ūd* it summarizes in twelve books the entire astronomical science of the Arabs.

A very different type of scholar was Ibn Sīnā (980–1037) of Bukhārā. After a breathless flight from Khwārizm to escape the clutches of Maḥmūd and an adventurous political career, he settled finally in Isfahān. 'Avicenna' has long

represented to European eyes the climax of Islamic science. It is frequently forgotten that he was first and foremost a philosopher (as were most Muslim doctors except Rāzī); he is credited with no less than sixty-eight philosophical works as against sixteen on medicine and eleven on astronomy and natural sciences. In the first category falls his *Book of the Healing* (i. e. of the Soul), an encyclopaedia of logic, physics, mathematics, and theology, and a number of *mystical works as well as a charming short *poem on the Descent of the Soul into the Body. His European reputation, however, and much of his renown in the Muslim world, rests on his medical works, and more especially the voluminous medical encyclopaedia called *The Canon*, which governed European medicine for several centuries after its translation by Gerard of Sabloneta in the thirteenth century. Even amongst Muslims it ousted the works of Avicenna's predecessors, and combined with his rather overrated mastery of philosophy to place its author on a pedestal above even the more original genius of Rāzī (p. 60).

(*d*) *Egypt and North-west Africa.* During the first three centuries of Islam Egypt shared in the activities centring on Baghdad, in some cases transmitted and developed by local schools. During the ninth century, for instance, it became the seat of an independent school of historians both Muslim and Christian, several of whose works have come down to us. The expansion of Arabic along the North African coast, however, proceeded so slowly that even in the ninth and tenth centuries it was only at Qayrawān in Tunisia that a literary circle had grown up. With the advent of the heretical Fāṭimid dynasty, which established itself in Tunisia in 909 and in Egypt and Syria sixty years later, intercourse between these countries and the East became more difficult. It is probable that this contributed to keep Egypt relatively free

from the influences that were remoulding Arabic literature in Asia, but of the works produced there during this period little that survives is of general interest. The Fāṭimids were, nevertheless, munificent patrons of learning. One of their first acts in Egypt was to erect and endow the university mosque of al-Azhar, which, after its reversion to orthodoxy and the destruction of its rivals in Asia, became, and remains to this day, the chief university in Islam. It seems certain that they encouraged the study of science and philosophy, and that the apparent poverty of Egyptian literature under their rule is to be put down to the wholesale suppression by the orthodox of everything tinged with the Fāṭimid heresy. The geographer Maqdisī in fact, writing in 985, says outright:

'Baghdad was in former times an illustrious city, but it is now crumbling to decay and its glory has departed. I found neither pleasure nor aught worthy of admiration there. Cairo to-day is what Baghdad was in its prime, and I know no more illustrious city in Islam.'

(*e*) *Spain* (750–1091). The development of an Arabic literature in Spain was delayed by many factors. Lying on the extreme perimeter of the Islamic world, Spain lacked also an organized central government such as the Abbasids had created in the East. The struggles between the Arabs and the Berbers and the factions that rent the Arabs themselves produced an atmosphere that but little favoured literary pursuits. More important still, the outside influences that had so powerfully contributed to the development of an Arabic literature in Syria and Iraq had no parallel in the barbarian Gothic kingdom which the Muslims had overthrown. In the East the Arab conquerors became the disciples of the conquered; in Spain it was the Gothic Christians who adopted the civilization of the Arabs. The Umayyad princes strove, by their enlightened and generous patronage,

to attract Eastern scholars to their court and succeeded in making of their new capital, Cordova, the centre from which the Muslim civilization radiated even beyond the frontiers of Spain. The culminating moment of their power, the reign of the illustrious 'Abdar-Raḥmān III (912–61), marks also the period when the genius of the Spanish Muslims, so long in germinating, found itself, to produce during the following centuries a series of men of letters whose works are among the most brilliant memorials of the Muslim civilization.

The first Spanish author whose work has come down to us is Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi (860–940), a freedman of the Umayyad family. His only work, apart from some poetry, was *al-'Iqd al-Farīd* ('The Unique Necklace'), a famous literary thesaurus on the lines of and to a considerable extent derived from Ibn Qutayba's *Fountains of Story* (p. 55), filled out, as the author states in the preface, by 'conceits from my own poetry, that the reader may learn that our Western land, for all its distance and isolation, has a share in both poetry and prose'. The *'Iqd*, partly in consequence of its greater elaboration and simpler arrangement, completely supplanted Ibn Qutayba's work, even in the East, and has remained to this day among the most popular works of recreation. While Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi was in the first place an aesthete, his successor was a philologist and ranks as the founder of the Spanish school of philology. Al-Qālī (*d.* 967) was born in Armenia and studied in Baghdad. In 942 he established himself in Cordova, where he spent the remaining years of his life and delivered his *Dictations*, which are still widely read in the East. They consist of grammatical and lexicographical dissertations on various subjects, such as Koranic passages, old Arab tales, historical narratives and the like, with citations of traditions and verses of poetry.

Of the earliest Spanish-Arabic poets we know little or

nothing, but that the traditional poetry was cultivated there can be no doubt. The 'new style' too was carried over to Spain, thus maintaining the unity of culture of the Muslim world. Towards the beginning of the eleventh century, however, a new feature asserts itself. We have seen that in the East the literary poets took no account of popular tendencies; whatever failed to conform to the established literary usages was ruled out of court. Though this doctrine was never quite superseded even in Spain, new strophic forms, the beginnings of which can be traced back to the earliest times, were then forcing a way into literature. The first to win a footing was the *muwashshaḥ* ('the girdled'), an arrangement in four-, five-, or six-line strophes, capable of wide variations in construction and rhyme, a typical scheme being *aa. bbbaa. cccaa*, &c. The causes which led to the development of the strophe in Spain and not in the East are obscure, but the influence of the popular songs of Spain and Provence, modelled on the hymns of the Latin Church, has been suspected, and something may be due to the special developments of Arabic music in the West.

The Arabic taste for elaboration and standardization is nowhere more strongly displayed than in the conventions which soon governed the use of the *muwashshaḥ*. The literary language was used throughout the poem, but it was regarded as a particular ornament if the last line were sharp and pungent and in absolutely incorrect speech. The use of the ordinary metres, though common, was disapproved, and the lines were broken up into sections of different length which rhymed internally throughout the strophe. It is not surprising that with these technical difficulties to overcome the later type of *muwashshaḥ* lacked spontaneity and, especially after its transference to the East, rapidly degenerated into a mechanical exercise, as stereotyped and artificial

as the *qaṣīda*. The writer of *muwashshaḥs* was, it would seem, limited by yet another convention in his choice of subject. Rarely does a *muwashshaḥ* treat of anything but love, unless in religious poetry. Even in panegyric the form of addressing a lover is often retained. There are of course frequent reminiscences of and even actual borrowings from the early poets, especially from 'Omar b. Abī Rabī'a (p. 32), and the later poets freely plundered their predecessors' *muwashshaḥs*.

The older forms, however, never lost their predominant position, and there were probably few poets who devoted themselves exclusively to the strophe. The stilted phrase and far-fetched conceit flourished as rankly as in the East; it would be hard to match this line from a Spanish panegyric:

> How do his underclothes not waste away,
> since he is a full moon (in beauty) and they are of cotton?

Even the hardened Ibn Khallikān finds it necessary to explain that cotton is said to rot on exposure to moonlight.

The Golden Age of Andalusian poetry extends a few years beyond the limits we have set in the East. The decay of the Umayyad dynasty (*c.* 1020) and disintegration of Muslim Spain into a number of petty kingdoms seemed only to increase the literary and poetic activity of the age by establishing a dozen courts instead of one. Of the many poets of the eleventh century the two best-known are *Ibn Zaydūn of Cordova (1003–71), who ranks generally as the greatest of the Spanish poets, both in his early love-songs and in the poetical epistles of his later life, and al-Mu'tamid (1040–95), the last native ruler of Seville. Both owe something of their fame to the circumstances of their lives, the former to his adventurous career and romantic attachment to the Umayyad princess Wallāda, the latter to the contrast between the magnificence of his court, when he ruled as *primus inter pares*

among the kings of Spain, and his pitiful death as a captive in Morocco. But both (like many others of their fellow-countrymen) were men for whom 'the most trivial and transient events of life instantly clothed themselves in a poetic form', and it is a matter for regret that no English translations exist of this most charming of all Arabic poetry. Ibn Zaydūn is equally noted as a prose-writer, partly for his letters, but more especially for his **Epistle to Ibn 'Abdus*, a consummate piece of literary craftsmanship and biting satire. The following verses are from one of his later strophic poems:

Still round thy towers descend the fertile rain!
Still sing the doves in every leafy den!
Córdova, fairest home of gallant men,
Where youth my childhood's trinkets snapped in twain[1]
And noble sires begat me noble, free!

Happy those days, with purer pleasures blest,
Those winding vales we roamed with boyish zest,
White-throated, raven-haired, all mirth and jest.
Chide not the trailing robes, the silken vest,
The reckless pride of youth—no wantons we.

Say to an age whose joys long since are fled,
Its traces by the lapse of nights now faint and moulderèd
(Softly the breeze its evening fragrance shed!
Bright shone its stars o'er the night-traveller's head!):
'Farewell from one whose love still burns for thee!'

The chief figure in the prose literature of the eleventh century is Ibn Ḥazm of Cordova (994–1064), the grandson of a Spanish convert. In his early years he was pre-eminently a poet, but, belonging to the narrowest school of Islamic theology, his activities were diverted to bitter attacks on his theological opponents; the sharpness of his tongue, which

[1] A reference to the practice of hanging amulets round the necks of young children.

became proverbially linked with the sword of the tyrant al-Ḥajjāj, eventually forced him to give up political life and brought about his practical excommunication. Of his immense theological and historical activities little has come down to us beyond his valuable and original work on Comparative Religion (*The Book of Religious and Philosophical Sects*). Strange though it may appear that it is in Arabic literature that we find the first works on this subject, the reasons for it are not far to seek. The tolerance of the Arab conquerors had left in their midst large communities holding most varied religious opinions, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, and even semi-pagans. The contrast between these beliefs and their own attracted the attention of Muslim scholars at an early date and led first to a large controversial literature (as a specimen of which may be cited the **Book of Religion and Empire* written about 855 by 'Alī b. Rabban aṭ-Ṭabarī, himself a convert from Christianity) and later on to a more scientific curiosity about them. There were also administrative problems connected with the special taxation and jurisdiction of the non-Muslims, which made it necessary for officials to have some knowledge of their creeds and practices. The rise of different canonical schools within the Islamic community itself led to the writing of works on comparative doctrine, generally with a controversial purpose, such as the **Distinction between the Sects* of Abū Manṣūr al-Baghdādī (*d.* 1037), which does not deal with any group beyond those which claimed to be included in Islam. It was reserved for Ibn Ḥazm, however, to write the first systematic and critical work on the religions of mankind, including their various sects and schools. His book opens with a theologico-philosophical classification of religions according to their beliefs on the origin of the world and the vocation of prophets; Christianity, for instance, comes under the category of creeds

which assert that the world was created in time and had more than one creator, and which reject certain of the prophets (i.e. Muḥammad and the Arabian prophets). In each section he details the arguments advanced in support of these beliefs and follows these with a refutation point by point. A large section of the book is devoted to a trenchant analysis, quoting chapter and verse, of the inconsistencies and, to the Muslim mind, absurdities contained in the Old and New Testaments. The various Muslim sects and philosophical schools are then discussed, and the work ends with an exposition of Ibn Ḥazm's own philosophical and theological views. It is clear that the purpose and style of the whole book is controversial, but it led to more judicial works on the same subject (p. 89).

It was natural that the Spanish historians should direct their attention almost exclusively to the history of the Arabs in Spain. The standard works written in the East circulated readily in the West, and their deficiencies in regard to Spanish history called for rectification. The first genuine Spanish-Arabic history known to us has been preserved in an early Spanish recension, known as the *Chronica del Moro Rasis*, but most of the other early histories have either been lost entirely or survive only in fragments. On the other hand an important series of biographical works, beginning with the end of the tenth century and continuing into the thirteenth, has fortunately been preserved, and enables us to reconstruct very fully the vigorous life of those literary circles that in their day represented the highest culture in Europe.

6. *The Silver Age* (A.D. 1055–1258)

ARABIC literature, as we have seen, was by its dependence on patronage very closely affected by the vicissitudes of Muslim history, and it is no arbitrary determination that fixes the turning-point in A.D. 1055. In that year a Turkish dynasty, the Saljūqids, finally consolidated Turkish hegemony in Western Asia by entering Baghdad. The effects of this revolution were not long in appearing in Arabic literature. Under the Turks, uncivilized nomads governed by a military aristocracy, there was no stability whatsoever. With rare exceptions the history of their rule in Asia is one of constant revolts and general anarchy, with all their attendant evils of devastation, depopulation, and fiscal exactions. It will readily be conceived how unfavourable such conditions were to the maintenance, not merely of literature, but of any form of culture. The occasional advent of a strong and enlightened ruler or series of rulers could not materially improve the situation as in the course of two centuries Turkish anarchy and rapacity wrecked the machinery of government evolved by the Arabs and Persians.

In another respect also the rise of Turkish dynasties adversely affected Arabic literature. The Persian princes had all been familiar with Arabic and were able to exercise a discriminating patronage. But the Turks who ruled in Western Asia were rarely versed in Arabic, and it was in their time that Persian re-established its literary predominance. Arabic works gained a hearing only at second-hand, and the Sultan's favour was largely determined by the Arabic-speaking personnel of the court, who were in most cases theologians or

secretaries. As the former were opposed to all independent thought on principle and the latter were rarely interested in anything outside philology, the obstacles placed in the way of a writer whose works did not conform to their standards were wellnigh insurmountable. One result of this appears in the tone of servility which, though found in Arabic literature from the earliest times, becomes increasingly prominent. Again, it is a curious exercise to read the apologies which writers of non-theological works found it necessary to insert in their prefaces.

'I am well aware (says Yāqūt in his *Dictionary of Learned Men*) of odious critics who will revile and disparage me, men whose mind has been poisoned by ignorance and whose inmost soul revolts against generous gifts of nature, declaring that it is of more importance to devote oneself to matters of religion and more useful in this world and the next. Do they not know that men are fashioned in different moulds and with different capacities? God has appointed for every science men to preserve it in its completeness and bring order into its substance, and every man is guided to that for which he was created. I do not deny that were I to cleave to my mosque and my prayer-mat such conduct would be better adapted to the path of safety in the future life. But to pursue the best has been denied to me, and surely it suffices to a man for virtue that he does nothing reprehensible and walks not in the way of deceit.'

In the Arabic-speaking lands of course the conditions were different, and are reflected in the increasing share of Egypt and Syria in the output of Arabic literature.

Apart from this, however, there is a marked deterioration in the quality, along with a no less marked increase in the quantity, of the works produced from now onwards. As the literary circle narrowed down to a highly educated minority its mind and literary standards narrowed in keeping and, as always happens, sought to compensate for loss of range and vitality by pedantry and affectation. Independence of thought

gave place to reliance on authority; original works were superseded by the popular compendium. The elegance and artistry that clothed the inventive productions of bygone writers with grace and wit were now cultivated for themselves and smothered the matter, as if to hide the essential dullness of mind of the age; in Montaigne's phrase, they leapt on horseback because they lacked strength in their legs to march on foot. It must be remembered, too, how the richest growth of Arabic literature resulted from the contact of the native sciences with Greek thought. By now the Greek impetus was almost worked out, while the studies in which it was still the chief dynamic were discouraged and confined to a rapidly decreasing circle. The rigid scholasticism already prevalent in theology was symptomatic (but neither directly the cause nor the result) of the creeping paralysis which was affecting the mind of Islam.

It was during our present period that these influences, beginning from the East, successfully permeated the whole fabric of Muslim culture. There can be little doubt that one factor which powerfully contributed to this success was the foundation of the great orthodox universities, of which the Niẓāmīya at Baghdad is the most famous. The chief task to which the young student was set was memory-training. Boys of six and seven memorized the Koran, the *Maqāmāt*, and the poetry of Mutanabbī. For years their entire activity by day and night was devoted to memorizing and studying enormous commentaries and super-commentaries on works of grammar, logic, and theology. It can have been no uncommon thing for a student in his twenties to carry between one and two hundred prose works in his head. By their control of higher education the theologians were able to sterilize all but genius and to eliminate the dangers arising from too independent a temperament and range of study. Such suppression, however, exacts its own

penalty, and it is perhaps not wholly paradoxical that it is precisely in the sphere of theology that the original thought of the age found its chief field of activity.

§ 1. *Iraq and Persia.*

It is with the greatest figure in Muslim religious thought that the period opens. Al-Ghazālī (1059–1111), after a brilliant career at Nīshāpūr and Baghdad, suddenly renounced his professorship and for ten years withdrew from the world. He himself tells us that his mind gave way under the strain of scepticism, and he felt that he must set himself to regain the faith he had lost. In scholastic theology, in philosophy, in the Shi'ite doctrines, he found no satisfaction. At length he turned to Ṣūfism and the light broke upon him. Returning to his native town he spent the remaining years of his life in study and contemplation with his disciples.

His literary activities began while he was yet a professor at Baghdad with a number of treatises on ordinary theological lines, including a * polemical work against the extreme Shi'ites and another, entitled * *The Disintegration of the Philosophers*, combating the exclusive use of reason in theology. It was however the series of works he wrote after his conversion to the Ṣūfī standpoint that mark an era in Islam. His aim in these was to bring the guiding principles of the Ṣūfī life into orthodox theology to redress the balance lost by the excessive scholasticism of the Ash'arite school, to substitute subjective religious experience for 'systems and classifications, words and arguments about words'. In the * *Rescuer from Error* (*Munqidh*) he illustrates by his own experience the grounds of his faith, which was expounded in full in his chief work * *Iḥyā 'Ulūm ad-Dīn* ('The Revivification of the Religious Sciences'). Besides these standard works, he wrote for popular use a number of smaller devotional * treatises both in Arabic and Persian,

some of which bear a striking resemblance in tone and matter to evangelical tracts of our own time.

Ghazālī was not so much an original thinker as a man of intense personality. The immediate effect of his work was to leaven the orthodox church with the moral vigour of the best elements in Ṣūfism. But for all that he was too far above his age and his revolt against the ethics of the scholastics too radical. To later generations he was no more than one of many theologians; the *Iḥyā* was neglected, and it was not until it was reintroduced at the end of the eighteenth century that the Muslim world began to awake to his significance. For European students he has long held a peculiar fascination, and like his great opponent Ibn Rushd (p. 99) is one of the few figures in Muslim history round whom a large European literature has arisen.

We shall appreciate better the revolutionary nature of Ghazālī's work if we contrast with him two famous theologians of the time. Az-Zamakhsharī of Khwārizm (1075–1143) belonged to the philological school of theology; few books used to be better known in the Arabic schools of Europe than his handbook of grammar (*al-Mufaṣṣal*) and the collection of moral apophthegms in polished rhymed prose called **The Golden Necklaces*. Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī (1149–1209) on the other hand was a philosopher and encyclopaedist and one of the greatest humanists of his time. He is said to have been the first to employ a systematic arrangement in his writings, which ranged from philosophy and theology to talismans and astrology. Both, however, are famed chiefly for their Commentaries on the Koran, the writing of which seems to have been a frequent exercise at the time.

'All sorts of erudite persons (says Suyūṭī) took to compiling commentaries, but every one of them confined himself to his own special science. The grammarian, you will see, has no eyes for anything

but grammatical constructions and the number of ways in which the words can be taken; the historian interests himself in nothing but the narrative sections—these he expands in minutest detail—and in stories of the ancients, whether they be true or false; the legist makes of his an almost unending discourse on law and goes out of his way to establish proofs of legal points out of verses which have not the slightest concern with anything of the sort; while the exponent of the intellectual sciences, especially the Imām Fakhr ad-Dīn, fills his with sayings of the Muslim and Greek philosophers, deducing one thing from another until the reader is lost in amazement at the incongruity of the final doctrine with the original verse, so that a learned theologian said of it, "It contains everything but the commentary".'

Though Zamakhsharī held the Mu'tazilite heresy, his commentary, entitled *The Unveiler*, obtained so wide a vogue that a century later its sting was drawn in an expurgated edition by al-Bayḍāwī (*d.* 1286) and in this form remains to this day the most popular commentary.

In the domain of philology and belles-lettres proper, all other names during this period are overshadowed by that of al-Ḥarīrī of Baṣra (1054–1122). He received the usual philological education in the still famous school of his native town and filled a minor post in the bureaucracy, which with a small inheritance enabled him to pursue his philological studies. Like most men of his class since the time of Badī' az-Zamān, he had acquired a ready mastery over the art of *saj'*, but had not apparently written anything of note until he sprang suddenly into fame by the publication of his **Maqāmāt.* These were frankly imitated from Badī' az-Zamān, the imitation extending not only to the literary form but even to the *mise en scène* and the character of the narrators, Ḥarīrī's Abū Zayd of Sarūj being represented as just such another witty vagabond as Hamadhānī's Abu'l-Fatḥ of Alexandria. The incident which

led him to compose his Maqāmāt is thus related in his own words:

'Abū Zayd of Sarūj was an importunate old beggar, full of eloquence, who came to us in Baṣra and one day stood up in the mosque of the Banū Ḥarām (the quarter in which Ḥarīrī lived) and after pronouncing a greeting begged alms of the people. Some of the magistrates were present, the mosque being crammed with eminent men, and they were charmed with his eloquence and wit and the beautiful phrasing of his speech. On this occasion he related the capture of his daughter by the Greeks, as I have related it in the Maqāma called "Of the Ḥarām". That same evening a number of the eminent and learned men of Baṣra were gathered at my house and I told them what I had seen and heard of this beggar and of the elegant style and witty allusiveness which he had employed to effect his purpose. Thereupon every one else there told how he too had seen of this same beggar, each in his own mosque, what I had seen, and how he had heard him deliver on other subjects a discourse even better than the one I had heard, for he used to change his dress and appearance in every mosque and show his skill in all kinds of artifices. They were astonished at the pains he took to gain his object and at his cunning in changing his appearance and at his ingenuity. So I wrote the "Maqāma of the Ḥarām" and thereafter constructed upon it the remainder of the Maqāmāt.'[1]

From the very first Ḥarīrī's Maqāmāt were regarded as incomparable. 'Had he claimed them as a miracle', says one biographer, 'not one would have been found to reject the claim.' It is chiefly for their literary and linguistic qualities that they are prized, but the infinite allusions to all branches of learning and all sides of life have rendered them a monument of erudition. Nor is it merely their formal perfection, the mastery of

[1] From Yāqūt's *Irshād*. For the history of the composition of the remaining Maqāmāt and of Ḥarīrī's mortification and final triumph, the reader may be referred to the Introduction prefixed by Thomas Chenery to his annotated translation of the first twenty-six Maqāmāt (there are fifty in all), a work which holds a place in the first rank of European translations from the Arabic.

language, the endless *tours de force* and cunning obscurities that have gained for it its privileged position. Ḥarīrī has had many successors whose linguistic attainments, though perhaps little inferior to his, have not preserved their work from oblivion. But Ḥarīrī never forgot that the primary purpose of the Maqāmāt was to amuse and entertain, and throughout his book the wit of the descriptions and the dialogue is set off by the delicacy and charm of the verses and the more serious passages.

'For more than seven centuries (says Chenery) his work has been esteemed as, next to the Koran, the chief treasure of the Arabic tongue. Contemporaries and posterity have vied in praise of him. His assemblies have been commented on with infinite learning and labour in Andalusia, and on the banks of the Oxus. To appreciate his marvellous eloquence, to fathom his profound learning, to understand his varied and endless allusions, have always been the highest object of the literary, not only among the Arabic-speaking peoples, but wherever the Arabic language has been scientifically studied.'

Few of the other Arabic works written in the East during this period are of special interest to us. Persian was gradually coming into its own as the language of poetry; only one Arabic ode, the peevish **L-poem of the Foreigners* of aṭ-Ṭughrā'ī (*d. c.* 1121), has won a place in literary history, and that probably less by its sterling qualities than because of its author's wit in linking its name with Shanfarā's famous ode (p. 21). Even history has little more to show than a *biography of the last Sultan of Khwārizm, written in 1241 by his secretary an-Nasawī. Two writers alone stand out among their fellows, and one of them was a Greek.

It was probably by Ibn Ḥazm's work (p. 80) that the theologian and philosopher ash-Shahristānī (1086–1153) was inspired to write a similar * *Book of Religious and Philosophical Sects*, than which there are few works in Arabic literature that

reflect more credit on medieval Muhammadan scholarship. Shahristānī was a man of cultured tastes and wide tolerance, whose interest in philosophical heresies was incomprehensible to his contemporaries. His book includes accounts not only of the Muslim sects and philosophical schools, but also of the various Jewish schools and Christian churches, the Greek philosophers from Thales downwards and the early Christian fathers, and even of the Indian religious philosophies. Himself strictly orthodox, he presents the arguments and views of even the most heretical schools with remarkable fairness, only occasionally interposing an incisive comment at the end of some peculiarly obnoxious or hair-splitting doctrine.

Yāqūt (*c.* 1179–1229) ranks among the most successful of Arabic compilers. By birth an Anatolian Greek, he was enslaved in boyhood, educated as a Muslim, and employed by his master, a merchant of Baghdad, as a travelling clerk, in which capacity he made several journeys to Syria, Persia, and the Persian Gulf. On gaining his liberty he earned a livelihood by copying and selling manuscripts, and was attracted to Merv by its magnificent libraries. Fleeing from the East before the Mongols in 1220, he reached Mosul in a state of utter destitution and there began his work a second time, removing finally to Aleppo. His **Geographical Dictionary* or Gazetteer is not only the most important work of Arabic geography of its kind, but includes also brief historical notices of the provinces and more important cities, and biographical data on many personages connected with them. Such a work, however useful, could scarcely avoid a certain aridity, yet in Yāqūt's hands, by an anecdote or extract from a poem, a description of natural beauties, or some personal or literary reminiscence, it is astonishingly enlivened and enriched.

The same felicitous touch is found also in his *Dictionary of Men of Letters* (*Irshād*), which has only now, through the efforts

of European scholars, come to light again, though it was apparently more highly esteemed by his contemporaries than his other works. It is a work of the first importance for the history of Arabic literature, and, as the passages on Albērūnī, Ḥarīrī, and others quoted above show, abounds with interesting anecdotes and extracts. Ibn Khallikān (p. 95) inserts in his biographical notice of Yāqūt a long (though to Western taste over-elaborate) letter addressed to his patron at Aleppo, describing his life in Khurāsān and his misfortunes after the Mongol invasion, which is of interest as a specimen of the later Persian-Arabic epistolary style.

§ 2. *Egypt and Syria.*

Although the First Crusade detached Syria from the heretical Fāṭimids of Egypt and restored it to full communion with the orthodox East, the unceasing struggle with the Franks left little leisure for literary pursuits. Among the few works of importance produced there during the twelfth century, the most interesting is the *autobiography of the warrior-chief Usāma b. Munqidh (1095–1188), itself the most vivid picture of the stormy life of the time, and possessing the further interest of being the first autobiography of any length in Arabic. The liberation of Egypt from Fāṭimid rule in 1171 and its reunion with Syria under Saladin and his successors opened for both countries a new era of prosperity, which was reflected in an outburst of literary activity, especially in the domains of poetry and history.

The recrudescence of poetic activity was accompanied by the introduction into the East of the new strophic measures (*muwashshaḥ*) recently perfected in Spain. It was the famous Spanish mystic Ibn ʿArabī of Murcia (1165–1240) who, it is said, gave the muwashshaḥ an established position in Eastern poetry. Ibn ʿArabī was not indeed primarily a poet. His

chief mystical and didactic work, *The Meccan Revelations*, and most of his other writings are in prose, but his great reputation gained for his poems (the best known of which is the collection called **The Interpreter of the (Soul's) Longings*) a wide circulation. In his poetry he carried to extremes the symbolism of the Ṣūfīs in clothing mystical experiences in the language of human passion. That European students have often in consequence been misled (in spite of our familiarity with this symbolism in such Persian poets as Ḥāfiẓ) is not surprising, for even Muslim critics have expressed grave doubts of the genuineness of the mystical interpretation claimed for them.

Surpassing Ibn 'Arabī in poetic gift, and universally acclaimed as the greatest Arabic mystic poet and the only one who can challenge the great Persian mystics, was his contemporary **'Omar ibn al-Fāriḍ* (1181–1235). Like all of these, he clothes his experiences in the language of human love, yet throughout

> 'God is the Beloved whom the poet addresses and celebrates under many names—now as one of the heroines of Arabian minnesong, now as a gazelle or a driver of camels, or as an archer shooting deadly glances from his eye; most frequently as plain He or She. The Odes retain the form, conventions, topics, and images of ordinary love-poetry; their inner meaning hardly ever obtrudes itself, although its presence is everywhere suggested by a strange exaltation of feeling.'[1]

Nor is it only in outward construction that Ibn al-Fāriḍ's art is linked to the traditional Arabic poetry; the rhetorical set of his phraseology, the conceits and word-plays and *tours de force* all follow closely the fashion set by Mutanabbī. Of his *dīwān*, a slender volume, scarcely exceeding twenty odes with other shorter pieces, the best known poems are the oft-translated *Wine-Song* and the long *Mystic's Progress*, a didactic

[1] Prof. R. A. Nicholson, in the essay cited in the Appendix.

poem of 760 lines describing his own mystical experience, which ranks as the crowning achievement of Arabic mystical poetry. The following fragment describing the vision of Divine beauty (from one of his lesser odes) displays, in Prof. Nicholson's translation, the charm of his language:

Though he be gone, mine every limb beholds him
In every charm and grace and loveliness:
In music of the lute and flowing reed
Mingled in consort with melodious airs;
And in green hollows where in cool of eve
Gazelles roam browsing, or at break of morn;
And where the gathered clouds let fall their rain
Upon a flowery carpet woven of blooms;
And where at dawn with softly-trailing skirts
The zephyr brings to me his balm most sweet;
And when in kisses from the flagon's mouth
I suck wine-dew beneath a pleasant shade.

Even among the minor and more mundane poets there was a temporary recovery from the subservience of matter to style which for two centuries had been crushing the life out of Arabic poetry. Bahā ad-Dīn Zuhayr 'of Egypt' (*d.* 1258) is the best known of the court poets of the time. His **dīwān* is marked by simplicity of language, absence of flunkery, and genuine depth of feeling, which with a delicate play of fancy give his poems something of a Western flavour, and led his English translator[1] to compare him to Herrick.

On a Blind Girl.

They called my love a poor blind maid:
I love her more for that, I said;
I love her, for she cannot see
These grey hairs which disfigure me.
We wonder not that wounds are made
By an unsheathed and naked blade;

[1] E. H. Palmer, from whom the following verses are quoted.

The marvel is that swords should slay,
While yet within their sheaths they stay.
She is a garden fair, where I
Need fear no guardian's prying eye;
Where, though in beauty blooms the rose,
Narcissuses their eyelids close.

Saladin's career naturally formed the subject of several biographies, the two earliest of which were written by men who had served under him. 'Imād ad-Dīn of Iṣfahān (1125–*c.* 1201) was the foremost historian of his century. As a young man he entered the service of the Saljūqid princes in Iraq, and transferred in middle life to Damascus. Later on he joined Saladin's staff as chief secretary for Syria, and accompanied him on all his campaigns. Besides his biography of Saladin he composed a history of his first masters, the Saljūqids, and a detailed general history of his own time (for the most part lost), all written in the intolerably ornate style of official correspondence. In a less elaborate though eulogistic style is the * biography by Saladin's chief secretary Bahā ad-Dīn of Mosul.

'For the last five years of Saladin's career', says Lane Poole in his excellent biography of Saladin, 'Bahā ad-Dīn is an incomparable authority and eye-witness of what passed, and an intimate friend and counsellor of the Sultan. His biography bears the unmistakable stamp of truth, and its personal bias and oriental hyperbolism are easily discounted. As our sole first-hand witness to the negotiations between Richard I and Saladin Bahā ad-Dīn's simple veracity is especially a quality of importance.'

Passing over the later * biography by Abū Shāma of Damascus (*d.* 1268), we possess still a third contemporary account of Saladin, but from an unfriendly source. Ibn al-Athīr (1160–1234), an Arab by birth, ranks among the greatest Arabic historians. His earliest work, a **History of*

the Atābegs of Mosul, finished in 1211, is an account of Saladin's chief Muslim opponents, in which consequently Saladin's achievements are disparaged in favour of the historian's own early patrons. The scales are more evenly held in his greater work, the **Kāmil* ('Perfection of History'). This, an extensive work in twelve volumes, contains a universal history of Islam down to his own time, excerpted from the works of former historians; for the earlier period it is little more than an abridgement of Ṭabarī's great work (which was over-elaborate for later students) with additions from other sources. Its value lies not only in the extracts from works now lost, but in the somewhat more critical handling of the material than is usual among Muslim historians. It is a curious fact that Ibn al-Athīr was unknown until the nineteenth century, and that all earlier Orientalists, Gibbon's authorities included, were forced to rely on the imitations and abridgements of his work by the Copt * al-Makīn (1205–73) and the gifted Sultan of Hamāt, * Abu'l-Fidā (1273–1331).

Two works of more general interest remain to be mentioned. The **Description of Egypt* by 'Abd al-Laṭīf (1160–1231), a philologist and physician of encyclopaedic range, is one of the most original scientific treatises in Arabic. Besides a full description of its flora, fauna, and ancient monuments (including a first-hand narrative of the attempt to pull down the Pyramids), it contains a gruesome account of the outbreak of cannibalism in Cairo during the great famine of 1200–1, and throws some interesting sidelights on the medical studies of the time.

Far more celebrated, both in Europe and the East, is the * Biographical Dictionary (*The Obituaries of Eminent Men*) of Ibn Khallikān (1211–82), of Syrian birth, but claiming descent from the famous Bactrian family of the Barmakids. While still in his teens he had studied at Aleppo just after the

death of Yāqūt, and it may have been from Yāqūt's biographical dictionary that he conceived the idea of compiling a similar work on wider lines. Instead of confining himself to a particular class of writers he included in his scheme men of eminence in every branch of life, omitting only the first and second generations of Muslims and the Caliphs, of whom abundant biographies already existed (Ibn al-Athīr, for instance, compiled a biographical work on 7,500 'Companions' of the Prophet, under the curious title of *Lions of the Thicket*). In his endeavour to attain the utmost accuracy he even omitted all persons of the date of whose death he could not find reliable information. His style is free from the straining after rhetorical effect that disfigures so much later literature, and in addition to many extracts from works now lost, the anecdotes with which the book is enlivened and the miscellaneous information incidentally conveyed make it not only most entertaining to read, but also one of the most valuable sources for our knowledge of medieval Muslim life.[1] The high estimation in which it was held is shown by the fact that it was translated into Persian during the author's lifetime, as well as by the supplements and continuations compiled by later writers.

§ 3. *Sicily.*

For over two centuries, from the middle of the ninth till the latter part of the eleventh, Sicily, under the turbulent rule of Arab chieftains, formed a part of the Muslim world and produced a number of Arabic philologists and poets. Of the latter, whose verse bears evident traces of Spanish influence, the most famous is Ibn Ḥamdīs (*c.* 1055–1132). Like many of his fellow-countrymen, he fled the island at the Norman

[1] A selection from de Slane's excellent annotated translation has been made by Mr. E. V. Lucas in his amusing essay entitled *A Boswell of Bagdad.*

conquest and took refuge with Mu'tamid (p. 78) at Seville, where much of his best poetry was written. He accompanied Mu'tamid into exile in Morocco, and on his death returned to Tunisia. The love of nature displayed in his work has gained for him the name of 'The Arabic Wordsworth'.

It was only after the Norman re-conquest of the island, however, that the Saracen genius of Sicily reached its full fruition in the rich outburst of Arabo-Norman art and culture. For a century Sicily furnishes the unique spectacle of a Christian kingdom in which Saracens not only were tolerated but occupied high positions, and Arabic was one of the languages of the court. Few contemporary Muslim rulers equalled the Sicilian Normans in their patronage of Arabic letters, and few found a worthier client than did Roger II in the Sharīf Idrīsī (1099– ?). After studying in Spain and much travel in Western lands Idrīsī was invited by Roger to settle at Palermo as a sort of geographer-royal, and with the assistance of the prince, who collected information from observers in different countries, compiled in 1154 his famous geographical treatise **The Pleasure of the Ardent Enquirer*, more commonly called *The Book of Roger*, a work which in competent opinion bears comparison with Strabo, though the author shows himself more credulous than his Eastern predecessors such as Maqdisī.

Shortly after 1154 another Sicilian exile, Ibn Ẓafar (*d.* 1169), during a brief return to his native land, dedicated to one of the Arab governors a book of essays under the title of **Consolation Philtres for the Man of Authority*. The essays, which are devoted to the virtues of resignation, patience, and so forth, consist as usual in expositions of texts from Koran and Tradition, verses, and historical anecdotes. A more original feature is that the latter, though based on incidents of Arabic and Persian history, are elaborated by the intro-

duction of fictitious characters (evidently modelled on the popular *Kalīla wa-Dimna*), and consequently deserve more properly the name of historical novelettes. Ibn Ẓafar wrote also a number of other works of belles-lettres, amongst them a book on remarkable children, still preserved in Paris.

§ 4. *Spain.*

The part played by the Turks in the East was filled in the West by the Berbers. Under the bigoted and incapable rule of a new Berber dynasty, the Almoravids, which had taken advantage of the weakness of the petty states of Spain to impose its rule over Andalusia in 1091, the fine flower of literature wilted away. Yet the poetic genius of the Spanish Muslims persisted in finding expression. It was at this time that a second form of strophic verse appeared, the *zajal* ('melody'), corresponding to the *muwashshaḥ* in construction and content, but composed throughout in the popular speech. Practically its only literary representative is Ibn Quzmān (*d.* 1160), the type of Muslim troubadour, living on the generosity of his patrons as he wandered from court to court. In Eastern Muslim lands the *zajal* never caught on and appears but rarely; in the West, however, issuing from and appealing to the people, and spread by oral transmission, it overleapt the barriers of race and religion and in Catalonia, in Provence, and perhaps even in Italy, contributed to, if it did not actually originate, the 'dolce stil nuovo' of Romance poetry.

Half-way through the twelfth century, however, a second Berber dynasty, the Almohads, under the inspiration of a remarkable theologian, Ibn Tūmart (*d.* 1130), overthrew their predecessors. The new rulers showed a much more tolerant attitude to letters, and in the latter half of the century there was a fresh burst of literary activity in Spain.

The most prominent figures in the new movement were philosophers, whose influence extended far beyond the bounds of Spain, and probably affected European thought far more deeply than that of their Muslim co-religionists. The first of the Spanish school of philosophy, Ibn Bāja (Avenpace), belongs rather to the pre-Berber period, though he died in Morocco in 1138. He was followed by Ibn Ṭufayl (*d.* 1185), the author of the famous philosophical romance called **Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* ('The Living One, Son of the Waking One'), depicting the development of the mind of an island recluse by its own innate and incorrupted powers to the highest philosophical level and the vision of the Divine. The mystic trend of the work is unmistakable, as in many of the Muslim philosophers. To assert as boldly as possible the rights of human reason, on the other hand, was the aim of Ibn Rushd (1126–98), who in reviving the study of Aristotle lent his name, barbarized as Averroes, as a battle-cry to the first assailants on the medieval Catholic philosophy in Europe. His chief work was undoubtedly his *commentaries on Aristotle, but to the Muslim world in general there was more interest in his vigorous criticism of and reply to Ghazālī's polemical work against the philosophers (p. 85), which he called **The Disintegration of the Disintegration,* and a *series of tractates on the relations between religion and philosophy. After an introductory argument that since the Koran frequently enjoins on men the study of the phenomena of Nature and this study involves the use of reason, it follows logically that the reason must be trained to the highest possible degree, he develops in these his audacious claim that any conflict between philosophic truth and revealed truth is to be resolved by allegorical interpretation of the latter, and that it must be open to philosophers (though not to the uneducated masses) so to interpret them and teach their meaning to the half-educated, i. e. the

theologians. Renan, as is well known, regarded him in consequence as an absolute rationalist, but more recent students are inclined to modify this judgement. The last of the Spanish school, indeed the last of the Muslim philosophers, was Ibn Sab'īn of Murcia (*d.* 1269), best known for his *correspondence (though its authenticity has been doubted) on philosophical subjects with the Emperor Frederick II. He was perhaps less a philosopher than a mystic, and his contemporaries described him as 'a Ṣūfī after the manner of the philosophers'.

Only one other work written in Spain under the Almohads falls to be mentioned here. The poet and traditionist Ibn Jubayr of Valencia (1145–1217), during his first pilgrimage between 1183 and 1185, kept a *journal, which he published soon after his return to Granada, partly for the guidance of future Ḥājjīs. Apart from the liveliness of the narrative, the detailed descriptions of the cities of Egypt, the Ḥijāz, and Syria gained for the book a certain authority, not only in the West, where it was frequently quoted with or without acknowledgement by later travellers, but also in the East, largely on account of the extracts from it inserted by Ibn Jubayr's own pupil ash-Sharīshī (i. e. the man from Xeres) in his standard commentary on the *Maqāmāt* of Ḥarīrī. Though the most valuable part for us is his full account of the ceremonies observed during the Pilgrimage at Mecca, this section does not lend itself to quotation, and the following description of a storm at sea is more typical of his style.

'Early on the Tuesday night a wind sprang up, as the result of which the sea became agitated, accompanied by rain which the wind drove with such force that it resembled showers of arrows. We were in pitiful case and exceeding anxiety, for the waves beat on us from every side like moving mountains. All that night we spent in prey to despair, hoping that in the morning our distress would be alle-

viated, but the day brought a tempest yet more terrible and grievous ; the swelling of the sea increased, the sky lowered in ashen blackness, and the wind and rain blew with such violence that no sail could hold fast against it. So recourse was had to small sails, but the wind seized one of these and tore it to shreds and broke the mast to which the sails are attached. Thereupon despair fastened on all hearts and the hands of the Muslims were lifted in prayer to God. So we abode the whole day, and when night fell the storm eased somewhat, we continuing on our journey all the while scudding under bare poles. We passed the night in alternations of hope and despair, but when the dawn broke God sent forth His mercy, the clouds dispersed, the air cleared, the sun shone, the sea began to subside, the people rejoiced, sociability returned and despair departed—praise be to God Who hath shown us the might of His power!'

7. *The Age of the Mamlūks* (1258–1800)

THE successive blows by which the Mongols hewed their way across Western Asia, culminating in the sack of Baghdad and the tragic extinction of the independent Caliphate in 1258, scarcely did more than give finality to a situation which had long been developing. Henceforth Egypt, emerging victoriously from the double struggle with Mongols and Crusaders, is the representative before the world of Muslim civilization and (with its dependency Syria) sole heir of the Arabic literature of the East. In Persia a new and brilliant literature arose from the ashes of the old civilization, but it was entirely Persian in language and feeling; Arabic literature has little to show under the Mongols except a short historical compilation (the popular, but rather elementary, compendium known as **Al-Fakhrī*) and some minor poets. Theological and scientific works, of course, continued to be written chiefly in Arabic, but these branches had long since lost the right to a place in literary history. The decay of Arabic studies is vividly presented by the traveller Ibn Baṭṭūṭa. On visiting Baṣra in 1328, he tells us,

'I attended once the Friday prayers at the Mosque, and when the preacher rose to deliver his sermon, he committed many serious grammatical errors. I was astonished at this and spoke of it to the qāḍī, who answered, "In this town there is not one left who knows anything about grammar". Here indeed is a warning for men to reflect on—Magnified be He who changes all things and overturns all human affairs! This Baṣra, in whose people the mastery of grammar reached its height, whence it had its origin and where it developed, which was the home of its leader [Sībawayh] whose pre-eminence is undisputed, has no preacher who can deliver a sermon without breaking its rules!'

For the whole period of this chapter Egypt was governed by the Circassian military caste called the Mamlūks ('White Slaves'). This space of five and a half centuries falls into two nearly equal divisions. Until 1517 the Mamlūks were independent rulers and Egypt, though troubled by incessant revolts, derived considerable material prosperity from the Indian trade; after the Ottoman conquest in that year a period sets in of universal stagnation and decay. As always, the political conditions were mirrored in literature; the output was enormous throughout, but the qualities of originality, virility, and imagination, weak from the first, die away completely by the sixteenth century.

§ 1. *Egypt and Syria to* 1517.

Only one poet of the Mamlūk age has gained any enduring reputation. The history of al-Būṣīrī (1212–*c.* 1296), who was of Berber extraction, is obscure; his name lives solely by virtue of his panegyric of the Prophet, called, in memory of his miraculous cure from paralysis by a vision that the Prophet cast his mantle (*burda*) over him, the **Burda* or *Mantle Ode*. It was at once received with admiration, which deepened into the veneration for its reputed miraculous power which it still retains, although in itself it has little title to such an outstanding position. In form a *qaṣīda*, it opens with the regulation *nasīb*, and leads into the main subject through a short didactic passage. Apart from its elegance and its general freedom from Ṣūfī ideas, from which it derives a certain pleasing simplicity, its chief interest to us is that it presents in brief compass the medieval legend of the Prophet.

Of the very extensive geographical literature of the time we may leave aside here the arm-chair geographers, who compiled bulky works from various written and oral sources;

their near kinsmen the cosmographers, such as *Dimishqī (*d.* 1327), avid of marvels and rather sparing of sober fact; and the bald tabulations of scientific geographical data, like the celebrated * geography of Abu'l-Fidā (p. 95). On a different plane from these stand the manuals of the art of navigation for pilots and mariners on the Indian Ocean, which for convenience in memorizing were not uncommonly composed in iambic verse. A * collection of such verses and a prose work on the same subject written in 1489 by Ibn Mājid of Najd, the son of a famous pilot and himself a pilot of some distinction (it is claimed that it was he who piloted Vasco da Gama from Africa to the Indian coast), are only now coming to light for the first time, together with a number of similar treatises of slightly later date, dealing more especially with observation as a guide to latitudes. Another original feature is supplied by the minute topographical descriptions of Egypt, based on a cadastral survey and 'Domesday Book' made in 1315. For general use these works were frequently abridged, as in the comprehensive manual for secretaries of al-Qalqashandī (*d.* 1418). After a long literary introduction and a discourse on the methods of writing and the technicalities to be observed in the matter of pen and ink, formulas, spacing, margins, and the like, the author inserts chapters on the geography of Egypt, * Syria, and other lands, both Muslim and non-Muslim, * the political and administrative organization of Egypt, courier-routes and pigeon-post stations, the calendars used by different peoples, specimens of the official correspondence carried on with foreign rulers and of other epistolary and documentary styles, the art of filing and précis-writing, and a host of other matters, to which we are indebted for many valuable side-lights on the Muslim world in the fourteenth century.

Like most other periods of Arabic literature, its By-

zantine age was richly endowed with historians in all its centres. Of the very large number of historical writers we may single out two for special mention. As a compiler of historical works, al-Maqrīzī (1346–1442) holds a very high place. Little more original or critical than other compilers and no less unscrupulous in plundering earlier works without acknowledgement, he is distinguished from them by the breadth of his interests and the careful industry with which he collected and put into order enormous masses of facts. His aim seems to have been to compile a complete cycle of reference works on Egypt, and to this he devoted the last twenty years of his life. We possess from his hand an extremely detailed *topographical description of Egypt (known as the *Khiṭaṭ*), with special reference to its antiquities; a portion of a history of the Fāṭimid dynasty (*I'tibār*), the loss of the latter part of which is specially regrettable; a second (still unedited) history of the Ayyūbid and *Mamlūk dynasties (*Sulūk*), brought down to the year 1440; a few volumes of the original manuscript of an unfinished biographical dictionary of famous Egyptians, planned on a scale so vast that it is astonishing that any single individual should have undertaken to collect the material for it; and several monographs on historical subjects.

The second of our historians has, in virtue of the subject of his biography, long enjoyed a reputation in Europe. Ibn 'Arabshāh (1392–1450) was born in Damascus and as a child removed by Tīmūr (Tamerlane) to Samarqand. We meet him later as secretary to the Ottoman Sultan at Adrianople, and finally engaged in literary pursuits in Damascus and Cairo. His biography of Tīmūr, entitled **The Marvels of Destiny*, is written in rhymed prose in the extremely ornate style, embellished with poetical quotations and all the flowers of rhetoric, which was favoured by Persian writers of the

period, but unlike the fulsome Persian biographies of Tīmūr breathes a spirit of bitter hostility to his hero. None of his other works has gained the same recognition; the best known of them is *The Entertainment of Caliphs*, a revision in the same elaborate style of an old North-Persian collection of tales.

The outstanding literary figure in the last half-century before the Ottoman conquest is Jalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī (i.e. of Assiut, 1445–1505). In Arabic literature, as we have seen, there is no lack of writers whose works run into three figures, yet for all that the list of Suyūṭī's productions seems incredible. We possess the names of 561 works from his hand, and of these no fewer than 316 are known to be in existence. Many are of course pamphlets, but not a few are bulky volumes. They range over the whole field of contemporary literary and scientific studies; some of them are merely collections of citations, as in his monographs on various minutiae of theological interest, and some are original works in which the available material is re-handled, often to advantage. The most important of these are: (1) a valuable treatise on the sciences connected with the Koran (*Itqān*, from which the quotation on page 86 has been taken); (2) a philological commentary on the Koran; and (3) a **History of the Caliphs*. By their convenience, inclusiveness, and easy style, Suyūṭī's treatises soon gained an audience from one end of the Islamic world to the other, and have for nearly four centuries held an authoritative position as the interpreter and epitomizer of the Muslim classical tradition.

The decline of the classical literature was, as often happens, the opportunity for the language and literature of the people. Both in the East and the West popular poetry and popular romances began to receive more attention; even poems written in the popular speech made an appearance in circles

to which hitherto they had been foreign. But the grip of tradition and the concentration of learning in the hands of the few strangled the attempt, and that so effectively that it can be said with a large measure of truth that no spoken dialect of Arabic has ever succeeded in becoming a literary medium. The popular literature, on the other hand, was rather grudgingly conceded a place; its productions were superficially adjusted to literary standards, and so there came into Arabic literature those story-cycles and romances of which one has gained for itself, under the title of 'Arabian Nights', a permanent place in the international literature of the world—often, it is to be feared, the only work of all the vast literature of Islam that is familiar to European ears. The early history of the compilation called the **Thousand and One Nights* is still obscure. The frame-story of Shahrāzād and Dīnārzād, which has been traced eventually to India, seems to have served as the standard frame-work for such collections (for example, that of the **Hundred and One Nights*) and it is fairly certain that, though the 'Arabian Nights' began with a translation of an older Persian collection, new tales were gradually substituted for the earlier ones. There never was, in fact, until recently a clearly defined collection of tales recognized as forming the *Thousand and One Nights.* Different story-tellers made up the tale of nights with different materials, including folk-lore elements from the most diverse countries, and even the language of the manuscripts varies greatly in literary accuracy. The first European translation, that of Galland, was made from an earlier recension than the quite modern text now generally adopted, which omits two of the best known tales—those of 'Alī Bābā and of 'Alā ad-Dīn (Aladdin). All the stories, however, from whatever source derived, have been as closely assimilated to Muslim ideas as the local Cairene tales; the entire work is a canvas to which

the Arab mind has faithfully and indelibly, though unconsciously, transferred the image of itself.

In Arab lands the *Thousand and One Nights* has often been surpassed in popularity by the portentous romances, sometimes in prose only, more often in prose and verse, that have gathered round various historical or legendary persons or events. The best known is that of *'Antar, the slave-born poet-hero of the desert, which is almost equalled in popular favour by the Crusading romance that centres on the Mamlūk sultan Baybars. To the European reader (or listener, as these romances are read out at breakneck speed to a coffee-house audience) the constant repetition of similar incidents gives them rather a monotonous character, but the appeal which they make to the Arab is undeniable.

Yet another popular entertainment, the *Shadowgraph play, made a short-lived attempt in the thirteenth century to establish a literary connexion. If space allowed, it would be interesting to speculate on the opportunity thus given to Arabic of developing a dramatic literature. But the opportunity was missed; the shadowgraph remained in its rudimentary state and Arabic drama was stillborn.

§ 2. *Spain and North-west Africa.*

The overthrow of the Almohad dynasty early in the thirteenth century and the re-conquest of Andalusia by the Christians, except for a narrow strip running from Gibraltar to Granada, was an event full of consequence for Spanish-Arabic literature. In the small remnant of its Spanish territories the Moorish civilization continued to exist for nearly three centuries with a splendour symbolized by the superb palace of its royal dynasty at Granada. We possess, it is true, few monuments of its literature, partly because of the fanatical destruction of all Muslim works at the time of Ferdi-

nand and Isabella's re-conquest, but at least one writer stands out above all his contemporaries for sheer mastery of the craft of letters. Ibn al-Khaṭīb (1313–74), in the course of an adventurous political career, found time for an astonishing variety of literary activities. Of his works there are extant in manuscript several collections of poems, letters, and documents, as well as portions of his numerous historical works, monographs, and essays, of which those dealing with Granada possess the greatest interest for us. Nearly all his works are written in ornamental prose, which in his hands regains a naturalness and elegance that is denied to all but a few of those who employed it. We must also apparently regard him as the last notable Andalusian poet and writer of *muwashshaḥs*, which seem to have died out in Spain by the end of the fourteenth century.

Of a very different order is the work entitled **The Ornament of Chevaliers and Banner of Gallants*, written to the Sultan's command by Ibn Huḍayl of Granada about 1400, with the aim of encouraging the people of the province to take part in the Holy War against the Christians. The horse, as was to be expected, inspired a whole literature in Arabic, and Ibn Huḍayl's book, which was based on earlier treatises now lost, treats fully of such subjects as its proportions, qualities, vices and gaits, saddlery, and the management of arms on horseback.

Under the pressure of the infidel, however, there was a steady emigration of Spanish families into the fringes of the opposite coast, and there is to be found the true continuation of Hispano-Muslim culture. In spite of political troubles and the general chaos in the interior, there persisted in Fez, Tlemsen, and the coast towns the old manners and the old love of letters of the great noble families of Andalusia. First Tunis in the thirteenth century and then Fez in the fourteenth

rise into prominence as centres of Muslim civilization scarcely inferior at their height to the great Eastern cities.

We must pass over the poets, the popular theologians, and the legists and grammarians in order to give adequate attention to the two outstanding figures of fourteenth-century Arabic literature. In 1325 Muḥammad ibn Baṭṭūṭa (1304–77) set out from his native town of Tangier to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. The young man, already distinguished for his piety and learning, his curiosity whetted by the adventures of the journey, was led by degrees to form a resolve to visit every Muhammadan country and any others that opportunity offered. He collected interviews with crowned heads as later men have collected their autographs, and became in the process a personage of consequence, travelling with a large retinue from court to court. All the while he stored in a retentive memory notes on the various countries and their peoples, manners, products, and other details, and when, after travels extending to East Africa, Constantinople, and the Russian steppes, India, Ceylon, and China, he returned home in 1349, he rested only a few months before rounding them off by visits to Granada and the Negro Muslim lands on the Niger. His tales, as we know from Ibn Khaldūn, were received with some incredulity at Fez, where by the Sultan's command he dictated his travels to the scribe Ibn Juzayy, and his work appears to have been quite unknown to Eastern writers. Some bald *summaries of it procured at the beginning of the nineteenth century roused European interest, but it was not until the French occupation of Algeria that the *original was found.

In mere extent of his travels Ibn Baṭṭūṭa surpassed all ancient and medieval travellers. That his work should contain errors was inevitable, especially as the loss of his notes at the hand of pirates in the Indian Ocean compelled him to trust entirely to his memory; but they are so few and rarely

important that the work ranks as an authority for the social and cultural history of post-Mongol Islam. His very faults are, if faults at all, those of his age; his sincerity is above suspicion. The book has, too, a literary interest of its own. Ibn Juzayy, it is true, decked it out with poetical citations, purple passages from Ibn Jubayr and others, and naïve interpolations of his own, but the work remains substantially a simple narrative, full of racy incident and touches of humour, without pretensions to style, and interspersed with anecdotes that throw an abundance of light on the manners of the times.

'At Lādhiqīya we embarked on a large galley belonging to the Genoese, the name of whose owner was Martelmīn (? Bartolomeo), and made for the country of the Turks which is known by the name of "the land of Rūm". It is so called from the Rūm (Greeks), because it was their land in ancient times. . . . There are now many Christians there, living under the protection of the Turcoman Muslims. We sailed for ten days with a favouring wind; the Christian (owner) was most kind to us and took no passage-money from us. On the tenth day we reached the city of ʿAlaya, which is on the frontiers of Rūm. This country called Rūm is one of the fairest countries on earth; in it God has united all the good features dispersed amongst other lands. Its people are the most beautiful in form, the cleanest in dress, the most delicate in food, and the most bountiful of all God's creatures, and for that reason the proverb goes "Syria for blessing and Rūm for kindness". Whenever we halted in this land, in hospice or private house, our neighbours both men and women—these do not veil themselves—came to enquire after us, and when we journeyed away from them, they bade us farewell as though they were our own family and household, and you would see the women weeping in sorrow at our parting.'[1]

We are particularly well furnished with historical works on

[1] A footnote at least is due to a later traveller, al-Wazzān of Fez (*d.* after 1526), who, after his capture by Christian corsairs, settled in Italy, and on his conversion adopted the name of John Leo. The Arabic original (or notes) of his work is lost, but in its author's Italian *version it remained the chief authority for European works on Africa until the end of the eighteenth century.

the Berber dynasties of North Africa, the best known and one of the most valuable being the **History of the Almohads* by 'Abdal-Wāḥid of Marrākush (1185– ?). All these local historians are overshadowed by 'Abdar-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406) of Tunis, the chief historian of his age and the inventor of a new science of history. We know from his own *autobiography the details of his adventurous political career in North-west Africa, how difficult it was for him to find the leisure he craved for his literary pursuits, and how eventually he made his way to Cairo, where he spent his last years in distinguished service. His great historical work (*The Book of Examples*) was first written in 1377 and subsequently revised several times. It contains an introduction, a *résumé* of general Muhammadan history (largely abridged from Ibn al-Athīr), supplementary chapters on more recent developments in the East, and finally a detailed *history of the Berbers and North African dynasties. As a writer of historical chronicles his true valuation has yet to be reached; his independent work will certainly stand comparison with that of any other Muslim historian, however much it may fall short of the standard he himself demanded. But it is on his comprehensive **Introduction* that his fame most truly rests. Coming at the end of eight centuries of Muslim political development, and from his own experience familiar with the raw material of history in North Africa, he attempted to group all its outward phenomena under general principles and thus reached, for the first time (so far as we know) in human literature, a philosophic conception of history.[1]

'Wise and ignorant are at one in appreciating history, since in its external aspect it is no more than narratives telling us how circum-

[1] The prior claim sometimes made for St. Augustine was rejected by Prof. Flint in his *History of the Philosophy of History*, i, pp. 150–71, where an important appreciation of Ibn Khaldūn's work will be found.

stances revolutionize the affairs of men, but in its internal aspect it involves an accurate perception of the causes and origins of phenomena. For this reason it is based on and deeply rooted in philosophy, worthy to be reckoned among its branches.'

'Human society in its various manifestations shows certain inherent features by which all narratives must be controlled. . . . The historian who relies solely upon tradition and who has no thorough understanding of the principles governing the normal course of events, the fundamental rules of the art of government, the nature of civilization and the characteristics of human society is seldom secure against straying from the highway of truth. . . . All traditional narratives must invariably be referred back to general principles and controlled by reference to fundamental rules.'

Ibn Khaldūn was singularly free from political, theological, or philosophical prejudices, and so was under less temptation than the majority of historians to make the facts fit a preconceived theory. He saw rightly that the course of history is governed by the balance of two forces, which for him were nomadic and settled life. He identified, therefore, the science of history with the science of civilization, and having established his general theory devoted the greater part of his prolegomena to tracing in detail the various developments of civilization in its religious, administrative, economic, and artistic and scientific aspects. In all this, of course, his work refers to and has value for only the political conditions of his age and community, but for those it is inestimable.

Of the numerous later histories written by natives of North-west Africa (most of which have been translated into French) only one has a wider interest in Arabic literature. In 1630 al-Maqqarī (1591–1632) of Tlemsen wrote, at the request of some Damascene scholars, a *history of Spain and biography of Ibn al-Khaṭīb (p. 109). The first part of his book contains a fund of information on the political and literary history of

Andalusia, extracted largely from the early works now lost, and unless some happy chance restores these to us, will always be our chief authority for the springtide of Spanish-Arabic culture.

§ 3. 1517–1800.

After the period of the Ottoman conquests a general lethargy seems to settle on Islam and especially on the Arabic-speaking provinces. How far it may be explained by ethnic characteristics, by historical or geographical conditions, by economic impoverishment, or by the deadening influence of a stereotyped circle of thought, are questions outside our range. The contrast with the awakening mind of Europe, it may be, casts an unduly dark shadow over the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries; there was no violent dislocation, but rather a dull monotony, scarcely relieved even by theological controversies.

The chief interest of Arabic literature lies now, rather paradoxically, in the wide extension of its geographical area. The upheavals of the fourteenth century had resulted in the spread of Islam in Central Africa, India and Malaysia, China, Russia, and Eastern Europe. With Islam came the Arabic Koran and Arabic theological literature; Arabic outposts were thus founded in the new territories and, especially where there was no existing literary language, supplied the medium of learned communications. In India, although Persian was the official language of the Muhammadan courts, there appeared from time to time a few non-theological works, and even poetry, written in Arabic, including two histories, *one of the introduction of Islam into Malabar and the struggle with the Portuguese, *the other of the kingdom of Gujarat. Even in the Malay Archipelago a few theological works were written in Arabic. In China, on the other hand, the Muhammadan community, although Arabic works were studied, wrote in Chinese only.

The literature of the Turkish lands in Anatolia and Eastern Europe stood from the beginning in much closer dependence on Persian than on Arabic models, and during the fifteenth century the only Arabic works written by Turks were on theological and scientific subjects. The absorption of the Arabic-speaking provinces into the Ottoman Empire appears to have led to a slightly more extended use of Arabic for general literary purposes. There is a fairly large number of Arabic works written by Turks in prose, rhymed prose, and verse, the best known being an elaborate *Bibliography of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish works by Ḥājjī Khalifa (*d.* 1658), a secretary in the War Department at Constantinople.

Islam penetrated into Central Africa both from the East and from the West. For many centuries Arab trading stations had been established along the East coast as far as Sofala, and in course of time large Muslim colonies grew up in Zanzibar and the continent. We possess a number of works written in these colonies, including several histories of the trading stations themselves, and an important narrative of the struggles between Muslims and Christians in Abyssinia written about 1540 by a Somali Arab surnamed *'Arabfaqīh. From Morocco Islam penetrated into the Niger territories in the eleventh century, and there too an Arabic historical literature came into existence in the sixteenth century, the most interesting work being a political and ethnographical account of the Songhay kingdom, written in 1656 by *as-Sa'dī, a native of Timbuktu.

Of Arabic literature in its native lands the most noteworthy feature is the revival of philological studies in the eighteenth century under the influence of a number of remarkable scholars, outstanding amongst whom is the South Arabian Sayyid Murtaḍā (1732–91), the last of the Zaydī school of Yaman. Of his philological learning an enduring monument remains in the valuable commentary (with the curious name of *The Bride's*

Crown) which he wrote to one of the standard earlier lexicons, but of far greater significance was his re-edition, also with an exhaustive commentary, of Ghazālī's *Iḥyā* (p. 85). The effect of his work, in which he threw over all pedantic and slavish dependence on earlier writers and went direct to his sources, combined with his personal energy and enthusiasm, was to arouse throughout the whole Muslim world a new interest in learning, and to bring back into the benumbed religious conscience of Islam the moral earnestness and vigorous personal faith of Ghazālī. It was time, for the crucial hour of Islam was striking.

EPILOGUE

FOR the Muslim world, and especially its Arab lands, the nineteenth century ushered in an era of storm and stress, both from within and without. Napoleon's meteoric invasion of Egypt in 1798 tore aside the veil of apathy which had cut them off from the new life of Europe and gave the deathblow to medievalism. Very gradually the infiltration of European ideas has undermined the old political and social conditions and created a new outlook.

It was not, however, in Egypt, nor was it under European political pressure, that this changed attitude began to show itself in the rise of a new Arabic literature. Nor, more strangely perhaps, were Muslims prominent among its leaders. Partly, no doubt, this was due to the fact that Western influence was most effectively exercised through educational missions, to which the Christian Arabs were naturally more responsive. In Syria therefore, and especially at Bairut, the first adjustments towards a synthesis of the ancient traditions and the new thought were made, while in Egypt the more superficial westernization favoured rather the rise of a generation neither at home in the old order nor fully informed by the new.

The struggle between the old and the new was, if anything, intensified when, towards the end of the nineteenth century, largely as the result of the continuous immigration of Syrian *literati*, the centre of the literary Arabic movement was transferred to Egypt. At the same time a fresh impulse was given by the work of the new generation, which had graduated from European schools and had in many cases spent years of study and travel in Europe. To this has been added in our own time the influence exercised, through the periodical press and in other ways, by the large Arab colonies in European countries and especially in America. This second period is marked by one feature of great significance, the development of a new poetry, no longer slavishly imtiating the ancient models, but

which, while retaining the old measures and much of the traditional mode of handling, draws its inspiration directly from the conditions of the poet's life. The part played in this case by Western, and especially French poetry is beyond all doubt; Aḥmad Shawqī, for example, hailed to-day as the leading Arabic poet, has himself related how his contact with French poetry completely changed the current of his poetic gift. Western influences have tempted others to more ambitious aims. The translation of the *Iliad* into Arabic verse, though with indifferent success, has aided the development of narrative poetry. Greater interest still attaches to the rise of a native drama, which has strongly developed in the last few decades, after a somewhat false start supplied by Arabic translations of Molière. In all this, perhaps, it is as yet a little difficult to distinguish between grafts on the ancient stock and pure imitations.

The same applies to the neo-Arabic prose literature. In the first half of the nineteenth century the old school was still unassailed, and in the sphere of history at least produced one writer who ranks with the great Arabic historians of the classical age. Al-Jabartī (1756–1825) himself played an important part in Egyptian politics during the French occupation and left two works of great value, one a *History of Egypt during the eighteenth century, the other a *diary of the French occupation. In the latter half of the century the field was occupied chiefly by Syrians, who, like Jirjī Zaydān in his **History of Islamic Civilization*, began to introduce scientific methods of research into Arabic historiography. Even in the sphere of theology the drive of the new thought has forced a lodgement and shown to many thinkers the necessity for a restatement of the doctrines of Islam. A typical example is the **Treatise on the Unity of God* of the journalist-theologian Muḥammad 'Abduh (*d.* 1904), rector of the famous college of Al-Azhar.

A very important part in the dissemination of Western ideas has been and still is played by the talented group of Syro-American writers. In these men Western life and education have gone far to eradicate whatever natural distinctions there may be between East and West, and has often left them with little more than a sentimental attachment to their native land

and tongue, witness this striking statement by one of the leading figures amongst them:

'I was in my twelfth year when I travelled to the United States for the first time, knowing nothing but a very little Arabic and French. . . . After ten years in America I found myself admiring the vigour of the American people and their freedom in thought, word, and action, but afraid of the effect of their crusade of materialism. I forgot everything of France but its literature, that literature which but increased my weakness and indecision in the race of life and turned me away from the material realities of existence. But English led me to the English people, and I found them in many ways, both moral and social, more congenial to one situated as I was. It was Emerson who was my first guide to the English; Emerson introduced me to Carlyle, and it was Carlyle who brought me back across the seas to Arab lands.'[1]

What are the prospects of the neo-Arabic literature? Much depends on how far it has taken root in true Arabic soil. It is inevitable to compare the revival of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the Hellenistic revival of the ninth and tenth, but the factors are too different to allow of any real parallelism. Nor are the present tendencies sufficiently clear. The new movement seems to have thrown all its weight into journalism, perhaps from some half-conscious idea that in the printing-press it has its greatest ally. But there lies also its greatest danger. The best augury for its future is that the danger is realized, and that the finest minds of the East are calling for a deeper appreciation by their fellow-countrymen of the riches and value of their own historic cultures, not in defiant opposition to the West, but as the only sure foundation on which, by the adaptation of the new learning of Europe, they may develop harmoniously towards a fuller life and a fresh unfolding of the spirit of man.

[1] From the Preface to *Mulūk al-'Arab* by Amīn ar-Rayḥānī (much abridged).

APPENDIX

SELECT LIST OF BOOKS OF REFERENCE AND TRANSLATIONS FROM ARABIC WORKS IN ENGLISH, FRENCH, GERMAN, AND ITALIAN

Chapter I

C. Brockelmann: *Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur* (2 vols., Weimar, 1898–1902). Bio-bibliographical summaries; invaluable, but requires re-editing. The same author's smaller work under the same title (Leipzig, 1901) is useful, but rather overloaded.

R. A. Nicholson: (1) *A Literary History of the Arabs* (London, 1907). A delightful work, of special value for poetry.

(2) *Eastern Poetry and Prose* (Cambridge, 1922). Contains representative extracts from 32 Arabic authors.

Carra de Vaux: *Les Penseurs de l'Islam* (5 small vols., Paris, 1921–5).

D. B. Macdonald: *Development of Muslim . . . Theology* (London, 1903, &c.). An invaluable and simply written introduction to Muslim thought.

The only comprehensive work on Muslim history is—

A. Müller: *Der Islam im Morgen- und Abendland* (2 vols., Berlin, 1885–7).

The standard work on Arabia and the Badawīn is—

C. M. Doughty: *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (London (repr.), 1922).

Chapter II

Th. Nöldeke: Article 'Semitic Languages' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (*Die Semitischen Sprachen*, Leipzig, 1887).

Chapter III

Sir Charles Lyall: (1) *Translations of Ancient Arabic Poetry* (London, 1885), chiefly from the *Ḥamāsa* of Abū Tammām. Sir Charles Lyall is unquestionably the most successful translator of the ancient poets in English, and his introduction to this work is invaluable.

(2) Translations of the *Mufaḍḍalīyāt* (Oxford, 1918), the dīwān of 'Abīd b. al-Abraṣ (Leyden, 1913), and of several other early poets.

Th. Nöldeke: *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Poesie der alten Araber* (Hannover, 1867), containing a general introduction and essays on Jewish poets, the elegies of the famous poetess al-Khansā, &c.

W. A. Clouston: *Arabian Poetry for English Readers* (Glasgow, 1881). This work reprints Sir William Jones's prose translations of the *Mu'allaqāt*, a miscellany of shorter poems of all periods translated by J. D. Carlyle, prose translations of several important odes by J. W. Redhouse, and a number of other pieces, with introductions and notes.

Fr. Rückert: *Die Hamâsa* (Stuttgart, 1846). A masterly version, which contains also translations of many other poems.

Mu'allaqāt: (1) W. S. Blunt, *Seven Golden Odes of Pagan Arabia* (London, 1903). (2) Th. Nöldeke, *Fünf Moallaqāt übers.* (Vienna, 1899–1900).
Imru'ul-Qays: *Diwan d'Amro'lkais*, trad. MacGuckin de Slane (Paris, 1837).
Ta'abbaṭa Sharrā: translations in Lyall (1) and Nicholson (1) and (2).
Shanfarā: *Lāmīyat al-'Arab*, tr. J. W. Redhouse (London, 1881).
Nābigha: *Diwân* . . ., tr. Hartwig Derenbourg (Paris, 1869).
Several dīwāns of minor poets have also been translated.

Chapter IV

Muḥammad: No modern critical work exists. Of the older works Sir William Muir's *Life of Muḥammad* (4th ed., Edinburgh, 1912) is the most accessible. The following may be recommended:
A. A. Bevan: Chapter '*Mohammed*' in *Cambridge Mediaeval History*, vol. ii.
Leone Caetani: *Studi di Storia Orientale*, vol. iii (Milan, 1914).
Koran: The English translations by Sale and Rodwell (frequently reprinted) and E. H. Palmer (Oxford, 1880) are all useful. A good general sketch will be found in Th. Nöldeke, *Orientalische Skizzen* (Eng. trans. *Sketches from Eastern History*, London and Edinburgh, 1892).
Ka'b b. Zuhayr: *Bānat Su'ād* (1) Trad. R. Basset (Algiers, 1910). (2) Tr. R. A. Nicholson in (2) above.
Labīd: *Die Gedichte des Lebîd*, übers. A. Hüber (Leyden, 1891).
Farazdaq: *Divan* . . ., trad. R. Boucher (Paris, 1870–5).
'Omar b. Abī Rabī'a: W. G. Palgrave, 'The Poet 'Omar' in *Essays on Eastern Questions* (London, 1872).

Chapter V. § 1

Sībawayh: *Sîbawaihis Buch* . . ., übers. G. Jahn (Berlin, 1894).
Shu'ūbīya: (1) Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien* (Halle, 1888), pp. 147–216.
Kalīla wa-Dimna: tr. S. de Sacy (Paris, 1816; Eng. vers. by W. Knatchbull, Oxford, 1819).
Abū Yūsuf: *Le Livre de l'Impôt Foncier*, trad. E. Fagnan (Paris, 1921).
Ibn Hishām: *Das Leben Mohammeds*, übers. G. Weil (Stuttgart, 1864).
Wāqidī: *Muhammad in Medîna* (abridged trans. of *Kitāb al-Maghāzī* by), J. Wellhausen (Berlin, 1882).
Abū Nuwās: *Diwân*, deutsch von A. von Kremer (Vienna, 1855).

§ 2

Die sogenannte Theologie des Aristoteles, übers. F. Dieterici (Leipzig, 1883).
Jāḥiẓ: 'The Merits of the Turks', tr. Harley Walker (*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1915).
Pseudo-Jāḥiẓ: *Kitāb al-Maḥāsin wa'l-Aḍdād*, 2. Teil übers. O. Rescher (Stuttgart, 1922).

§ 3

Ṣūfism: (1) R. A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* (London, 1914); gives a short introductory survey.
(2) L. Massignon, *Essai sur les origines du Lexique technique de la Mystique musulmane* (Paris, 1922); includes a valuable summary of the development of Ṣūfism and sufistic schools during the first three centuries.
Hallāj: L. Massignon, *La Passion d' . . . al-Hallāj* (Paris, 1922).

Qushayrī: R. Hartmann, *Al-Kuschairîs Darstellung des Ṣûfitums* (Berlin, 1914).
Tradition: (1) I. Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, 2. Theil (Halle, 1890), is the standard monograph on the subject.
(2) A. Guillaume, *The Traditions of Islam* (Oxford, 1924); a useful introduction, based on the preceding.
(3) W. Goldsack, *Selections from Muḥammadan Traditions* (Madras, 1923); taken from the very popular fourteenth-century compilation called *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*.
Bukhārī: *Les Traditions islamiques*, trad. O. Houdas et W. Marçais (Paris, 1903–14).
Balādhurī: *The Origins of the Islamic State*, tr. P. K. Ḥitti and F. C. Murgotten (New York, 1916–24).
Ṭabarī[1]: *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sassaniden*, übers. . . . Th. Nöldeke (Leyden, 1879).
Mas'ūdī: (1) *Les Prairies d'Or* . . ., trad. C. Barbier de Meynard et Pavet de Courteille (Paris, 1861–77).
(2) *Le Livre de l'Avertissement et de la Revision*, trad. B. Carra de Vaux (Paris, 1897).
Geographers: A series of French translations is in course of preparation.
Iṣṭakhrī: *The Oriental Geography of Ebn Haukal*, trans. [from a Persian MS. combining both works] Sir Wm. Ouseley (London, 1800).
Ibn Ya'qūb: G. Jacob, *Ein arabischer Berichterstatter aus dem 10. Jahrh.* (Berlin, 1896).
Ibn Faḍlān: *Ibn Foszlans u. a. Araber Berichte* . . ., übers. C. M. Frähn (St. Petersburg, 1822).
Chain of Histories: (1) *Relations des voyages faits par les Arabes* . . ., trad. Reinaud (Paris, 1845). An English version exists (London, 1733) of the older translation by Renaudot.
(2) *Voyage du Marchand Sulayman en Inde et en Chine* . . ., trad. G. Ferrand (Paris, 1922).
Livre des Merveilles de l'Inde, trad. L. M. Dévic (Leyden, 1886).
L'Abrégé des Merveilles, trad. B. Carra de Vaux (Paris, 1897).

§ 4

Motenebbi, der grösste arabische Dichter . . ., übers. J. von Hammer (Vienna, 1824).
Abū Firās, ein arabischer Dichter und Held, übers. R. Dvořak (Leyden, 1895).
Al-Fārābī: (1) *Philosophische Abhandlungen*, übers. F. Dieterici (Leyden, 1892).
(2) *Der Musterstaat* . . ., übers. F. Dieterici (Leyden, 1900).
Abu'l-'Alā: (1) R. A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Poetry* (Cambridge, 1921).
(2) *The Letters of Abu'l-'Alā*, tr. D. S. Margoliouth (Oxford, 1898).
Miskawayh: D. S. Margoliouth, *The Eclipse of the Abbasid Caliphate* (Oxford, 1921); contains trans. of vols. v and vi of the *Experiences of the Nations* with two continuations by later writers.
Tanūkhī: *The Table-Talk of a Mesopotamian Judge* (i. e. vol. i of *The Collection of Histories*), tr. D. S. Margoliouth (London, 1922).
Abshīhī: *Al-Mostaṭraf*, trad. par G. Rat (Paris, 1899–1902).
Māwardī: *Les Statuts gouvernementaux*, trad. E. Fagnan (Algiers, 1915).
'Alī (attributed to): *La Kasîda ez-Zaïnabiyya*, trad. A. Raux (Paris, 1907).

[1] The translation of the Persian version of Ṭabarī's Annals (*Chronique de Tabari*, trad. . . . M. H. Zotenberg) gives a very imperfect idea of the Arabic original.

Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafā : *Die Propaedeutik* (*Logik, Naturanschauung, Anthropologie, Lehre von der Weltseele*) *der Araber im X. Jahrh.* . . ., übers. F. Dieterici (Berlin and Leipzig, 1861–72).
Badī' az-Zamān Hamadhānī : *The Maqámát*, tr. W. Prendergast (Madras, 1915).
Tha'alibī : (1) *Les Rois de Perse* . . ., trad. H. Zotenberg (Paris, 1900).
(2) C. Barbier de Meynard, *Tableau littéraire de la Khorassan* [trans. from book iv of *Yatímat ad-Dahr*], Journal Asiatique, 1853, 1854.
'Utbī : *The Kitāb al-Yamīnī*, trans. J. Reynolds (London, 1858).
al-Bērūnī : (1) *The Chronology of Ancient Nations*, tr. E. Sachau (London, 1879).
(2) *India*, tr. E. Sachau (London, 1888).
Ibn Sīnā : (1) *Traités mystiques d' . . . Avicenne*, trad. A. F. Mehren (Leyden, 1889–99).
(2) *Qaṣída on the Human Soul*, tr. E. G. Browne (in *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. ii (London, 1906), pp. 110–11).
For Spanish and Sicilian poetry in general, the standard work is A. F. von Schack, *Poesie und Kunst der Araber in Spanien und Sicilien* (2nd ed., Stuttgart, 1877).
Ibn Zaydūn : A. Cour, *Un poète arabe d'Andalousie* (Constantine, 1920) ; includes translations of some fifty poems and of the *Epistle to Ibn 'Abdūs*.
'Alī aṭ-Ṭabarī : *The Book of Religion and Empire*, tr. A. Mingana (London, 1922).
al-Baghdādī : *Moslem Sects and Schisms*, tr. K. Seeley (Columbia, 1920).

Chapter VI

al-Ghazālī : (1) *Streitschrift* . . . *gegen die Bāṭinijja-Sekte*, ed. with analysis by I. Goldziher (Leyden, 1916).
(2) T. J. de Boer, *Die Widersprüche der Philosophie nach al-Ġazzālī und ihr Ausgleich durch Ibn Roshd* (Strassburg, 1894).
(3) *Le Préservatif de l'Erreur*, trad. C. Barbier de Meynard (in Journal Asiatique, 1873, &c.).
(4) Hans Bauer, *Islamische Ethik* (Halle, 1917–22) ; translations of books 12–14 of Ghazālī's *Iḥyā*.
(5) *La Perle précieuse*, tr. L. Gautier (Geneva, 1878) ; a popular treatise on eschatology.
(6) *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, tr. W. H. T. Gairdner (London, 1924) ; a mystic treatise on Light.
Zamakhsharī : *Les Colliers d'Or*, trad. C. Barbier de Meynard (Paris, 1876).
Ḥarīrī : *The Assemblies*, tr. T. Chenery (London, 1867) ; continued by F. Steingass (London, 1898). Two *maqāmāt* are translated into English rhymed prose in R. A. Nicholson (2) above.
Ṭughrā'ī : *Lāmīyat al-'Ajam*, tr. by J. W. Redhouse in Clouston, *op. cit.*
Nasawī : *Histoire du Sultan Djelal ed-Din*, trad. O. Houdas (Paris, 1895).
Shahristānī : *Religionsparteien und Philosophenschule*, übers. Th. Haarbrücker (Halle, 1850–1).
Yāqūt : *Dictionnaire* . . . *de la Perse*, trad. C. Barbier de Meynard (Paris, 1861).
Usāma b. Munqidh : *Souvenirs historiques* . . ., trad. H. Derenbourg (Paris, 1895).
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I. SUBJECT INDEX

Academies, 66, 75, 84.
Aramaic culture, 8, 9, 22, 33–4, 44.
Belles-lettres, 39, 48–9, 55–6, 62–3, 65, 70–1, 76, 79, 86, 87–9, 98, 106, 109, 115.
Comparative Religion, 80–1, 89.
Drama, 108, 118.
Geography (including Travel-books), 47, 56, 59–60, 90, 97, 100–1, 104–5, 110–11.
Hellenistic culture, 34–6, 44–6, 59, 84.
History and Biography, 29, 39, 40–1, 56–8, 72, 73, 74, 81, 90, 91, 92, 94–6, 102, 105–6, 107, 109, 111–13, 115, 118.
Horsemanship, 109.
Indian Literature, 35, 37, 39, 46, 65, 73.
Jurisprudence, 29, 40–1, 57.
Koranic Commentaries, 57–8, 86–7, 106.
Lost works, 6, 41, 45, 58, 66, 67, 73, 75, 79, 81, 106, 108, 114.
Maqāmāt, 70, 84, 87.
Muslim sciences, 27–9, 36.
Mu'tazilites, 44–5, 47, 49, 51, 68, 87.
Muwashshaḥ, 77–8, 91, 109.
Neoplatonism, 34, 44, 63, 68.
Persian culture, 31, 34–5, 42, 43, 65.
Philology, 28, 37–9, 55, 76, 86, 87, 97, 115.
Philosophy, 5, 44–5, 46, 63, 68, 74, 75, 85, 86, 90, 99–100.
Poetry, 14–22, 23, 26, 27, 30–2, 41–3, 55, 61–2, 63–4, 67–8, 74, 76–9, 89, 91–4, 97, 98, 103, 104, 106, 109, 115, 117–18.
Qaṣīda, 14, 18–19, 31–2, 61–2, 103.
Rhymed Prose (*saj'*), 11, 25, 62–3, 64, 67, 69, 72, 86, 87, 93, 105, 109, 115.
Science (Medicine, Physics, &c.), 5, 36, 46–7, 60–1, 68, 72–3, 74, 75, 95, 102, 104.
Shi'ites, 49, 50, 54, 56, 60, 61, 67, 85.
Shu'ūbīya, 34, 39.
Ṣūfism, 49–51, 85, 92.
Theology, 5, 29, 44–5, 49–50, 67, 68, 80–1, 84–7, 102, 106, 114, 119.
Tradition, 29, 37, 40, 52–4, 57, 69.
Zajal, 98.

II. INDEX OF PROPER NAMES AND TITLES

'Abd al-Laṭīf, 95.
'Abdal-Wāḥid, 112.
-Abshīhī, 66.
Abu'l-'Alā, 63–4.
Abu'l-'Atāhiya, 42.
Abu'l-Faraj Iṣfahānī, 17.
Abu'l-Fidā, 95, 104.
Abū Firās, 62.
Abū Ḥayyān Tawḥīdī, 65.
Abū Mash'ar, 47.
Abū Nuwās, 42–3.
Abū Shāma, 94.
Abū Tammām, 17, 43.
Abū 'Ubayda, 39.
Abū Yūsuf, 40.
-Akhtal, 31.
'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, 67.
America, 117–19.
'Antara, 19, 108.
'Arabfaqīh, 115.
Arabian Nights, 65, 107.
Aristotle, 36, 38, 46, 63, 68, 99.
-A'shā, 22.
-Ash'arī, 49.
Aucassin and Nicolette, 70.
Averroes, *see* Ibn Rushd.
Avicenna, *see* Ibn Sīnā.

Badī' az-Zamān, *see* Hamadhānī.
-Baghdādī (Abū Manṣūr), 80.

Bahā ad-Dīn of Mosul, 94.
-Balādhurī, 56.
Bashshār b. Burd, 41.
Baybars, Romance of, 108.
-Bayḍāwī, 87.
-Bērūnī, 72.
-Buḥturī, 17.
-Bukhārī, 53–4, 69.
Bukhtyashū', 46.
-Būṣīrī, 103.

Chronica del Moro Rasis, 81.

-*Fakhrī*, 102.
-Fārābī, 63.
Farazdaq, 31.
-Farghānī, 47.
-*Fihrist*, 66.

Ghassān, 22.
-Ghazālī, 51, 85–6, 99, 116.

-Ḥallāj, 51.
-Ḥamadhānī (Badī' az-Zamān), 69–71, 87.
-*Ḥamāsa*, 17, 43.
-Ḥarīrī, 87–9, 100.
-Ḥasan of Baṣra, 50.
Ḥassān b. Thābit, 30.
Ḥīra, 8, 21, 22, 32.
Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq, 46.

Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, 76.
Ibn al-'Amīd, 65.
Ibn 'Arabī, 92.
Ibn 'Arabshāh, 105.
Ibn al-Athīr, 94–5, 96, 112.
Ibn Bāja, 99.
Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, 102, 110–11.
Ibn Faḍlān, 59.
Ibn Ḥamdīs, 96.
Ibn Ḥanbal, 45, 52.
Ibn Ḥawqal, 59.
Ibn Ḥazm, 79–80, 89.
Ibn Hishām, 41.
Ibn Huḍayl, 109.
Ibn Isḥāq, 40.
Ibn Jubayr, 100–1, 111.
Ibn Khaldūn, 110, 112–13.
Ibn Khallikān, 91, 95.
Ibn al-Khaṭīb, 109, 113.
Ibn Khurdādhbih, 47.
Ibn Mājid, 104.
Ibn al-Muqaffa', 39.
Ibn al-Mu'tazz, 43.
Ibn Nubāta, 62.
Ibn Qutayba, 17, 55, 76.
Ibn Quzmān, 98.
Ibn Rushd (Averroes), 86, 99.
Ibn Sab'īn, 100.
Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), 73.
Ibn Ṭufayl, 99.
Ibn Ya'qūb, 59.
Ibn Ẓafar, 97–8.
Ibn Zaydūn, 78–9.
-Idrīsī, 97.
Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafā, 68.
Iliad, 118.
'Imād ad-Dīn Iṣfahānī, 94.
Imru'ul-Qays, 18 n., 20, 32.
-Iṣṭakhrī, 59.

-Jabartī, 118.
-Jāḥiẓ, 47–8, 63 n., 65.
Jarīr, 31.
Jundī-Shābūr, 34, 37, 44.

Ka'b b. Zuhayr, 30.
Kalīla and Dimna, 39, 98.
-Khalīl, 38.
-Khwārizmī (Abū Bakr), 62.
-Khwārizmī (Muḥ. b. Mūsā), 46.
-Kindī, 47, 59.
Kitāb al-Aghānī, 17.
Koran, 24–6, 28, 29, 30, 50, 51, 84, 114.

Labīd, 20 n., 30.
Leo Africanus, 111 n.

-Madā'inī, 41, 57.
Madīna, 24, 27, 29, 40.
Mahmūd of Ghazna, 71.
-Majnūn, 34.
-Makīn, 95.
Mālik b. Anas, 40, 52.
-Maqdisī, 59, 62 n., 75, 97.
-Maqqarī, 113.
-Maqrīzī, 105.
-Mas'ūdī, 58, 60.
-Māwardī, 67.
Mecca, 8, 23, 24, 27, 31, 32.
Miskawayh, 65.
Mu'allaqāt, 16.
-Mufaḍḍal, 16.

Mufaḍḍalīyāt, 16.
Muḥammad, 23–5, 28, 30, 103.
Muḥammad ʿAbduh, 119.
-Muḥāsibī, 49.
-Murtaḍā (Sayyid), 115.
-Murtaḍā (Sharīf), 67.
Muslim, 53–4, 69.
-Muʿtamid, 78, 97.
-Mutanabbī, 61–2, 84, 92.

-Nābigha, 22.
-Nadīm, 66.
Najd, 23, 104.
-Nasawī, 89.

ʿOmar b. Abī Rabīʿa, 32, 78.
ʿOmar b. al-Fāriḍ, 92–3.

Plato, 46, 63.
Plotinus, 46.
Ptolemy, 59.

-Qālī, 76.
-Qalqashandī, 104.
-Qushayrī, 52.
Qustā b. Lūqā, 46.

Rābiʿa of Baṣra, 50.
-Raḍī, 67.
-Rayḥānī, Amīn, 119.
-Rāzī (historian), 81.
-Rāzī (Fakhr ad-Dīn), 86, 87.
-Rāzī (Muḥ. b. Zakarīya), 60, 74.

Ṣabians, 34.
-Ṣāḥib Ibn ʿAbbād, 65.
Ṣaḥīḥ, 53–5.
Ṣayf ad-Dawla, 61–3.
-Shahristānī, 89.
-Shanfarā, 21, 89.
-Sharīshī, 100.
Shawqī, Aḥmad, 118.
Sībawayh, 38, 102.
-Suyūṭī, 86, 106.

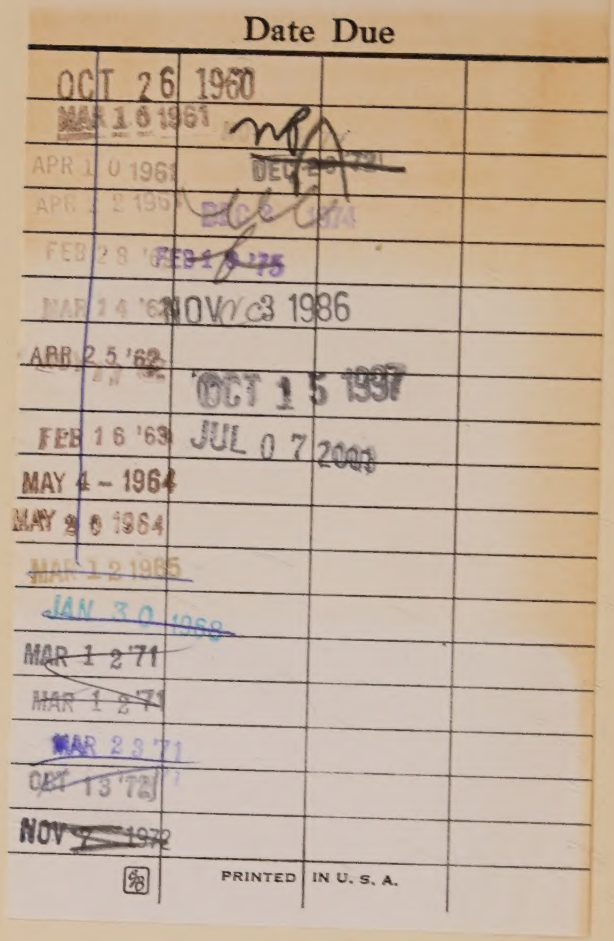
Ta'abbaṭa Sharra, 20–1.
-Ṭabarī ('Alī b. Rabban), 80.
-Ṭabarī (Muḥ. b. Jarīr), 56–7, 95.
-Ṭanūkhī, 65.
-Thaʿālibī, 69, 71.
Theology of Aristotle, 46.
-Ṭughrā'ī, 89.
-Ṭūsī (Muḥammad), 67.

Umayya b. Abi'ṣ-Ṣalt, 23.
Usāma b. Munqidh, 91.
-ʿUtbī, 72.

Walīd II, 32.
-Wāqidī, 41, 54.

Yaman, 8, 21, 29, 67, 115.
-Yaʿqūbī, 56, 59.
Yāqūt, 65, 72, 83, 90–1, 95.

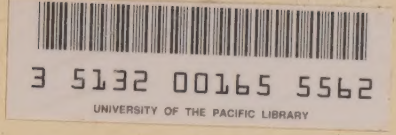
-Zamakhsharī, 86–7.
Zaydān, Jirjī, 118.
Zuhayr b. Abī Sulma, 21.
Zuhayr (Bahā ad-Dīn), 93–4.



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